THE GOLDEN TALISMAN

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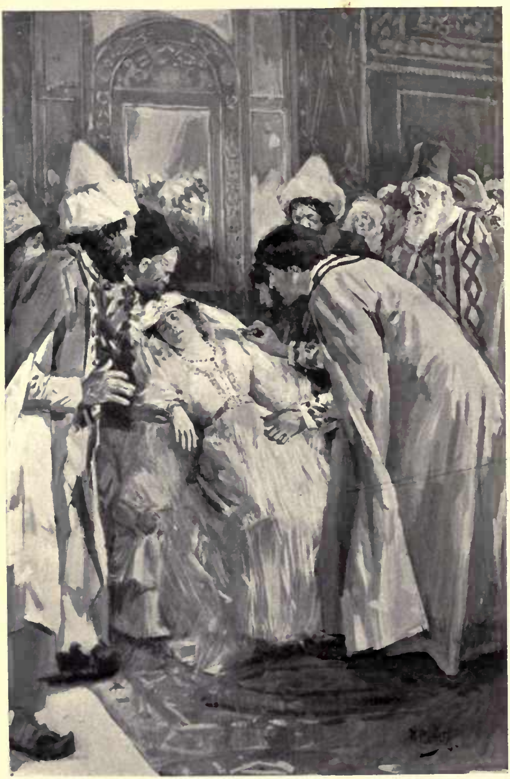
THE GOLDEN TALISMAN



"HE QUICKLY TOOK THE GOLDEN BOTTLE FROM HIS NECK."

THE
GOLDEN TALISMAN

BY

H. PHELPS WHITMARSH

AUTHOR OF "THE WORLD'S ROUGH HAND," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY

H. BURGESS

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THE GOLDEN TALISMAN

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER PAGE

Prologue 9

I. The Expedition 14

II. The Mysterious Kingdom 28

III. The Rose Gardens 50

IV. A Dangerous Journey 95

V. The Attack and Escape 120

VI. The Festival of Mi-Carême 140

VII. New Friends 168

VIII. Fortune Frowns 195

IX. Fortune Smiles 215

X. The Garden of the East 223

XI. The Friendship of Chan Fou 239

XII. Into the Forbidden Country 250

XIII. The Grand Lama 268

XIV. Winning the Princess 294

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ILLUSTRATIONS.

PAGE

"He quickly took the golden bottle from his neck" . . . . . *Frontispiece* 42

"Strange and weird it seemed, lighted by the flickering torch" 63

"'See the beds of roses, and there are the violets'" 164

"'Steady, now, Johnny, boy'" 218

THE GOLDEN TALISMAN.

PROLOGUE.

IN the wild, mountainous district of Central Asia, where the great chains of the Himalaya and Kuen-lem mountains join, stretches a broad plateau. It is walled in by nature, and guarded by giant peaks lifting their white heads toward heaven like eternal sentinels. Though beset on all sides by savage and rapacious tribes of hill-men, this beautiful expanse of almost level country, known as Kaffiristan, has no need of force of arms to protect its independence; for by one pass only can entrance and exit be made, and this is guarded by the most powerful fighting men of the realm.

Lying north of Thibet and west of the Chinese Empire, attempts have been made by both of these countries, in the centuries past, to conquer this wealthy little nation. These have been chronicled by old writers in both Sanskrit and Hindoostanee, all of whom agree that the treasure-stores of Kaffiristan are so great as to be almost beyond belief. Legends, in all dialects of Northern India, come down to us of brave men who, at the heads of armies, have attacked the pass, and given their lives in the pursuit of conquest. We learn, too, of many youths, bent upon adventures of the most hazardous kind, and lured on by the promise of fame, traversing the unknown paths of the mountains in the hope of discovering some new way into the enchanted plateau. Whether any of these youths succeeded in their ambition we have no means of telling, but certain it is that neither they nor the warriors ever returned to tell of it. Moreover, of all the prisoners captured by the people of Kaffiristan, no one, until recently, has been known to escape.

Among the old records the only authentic bit of information regarding this strange country is written upon a standard, which was found after a great battle just without the pass. It reads thus: "Never relinquish conquest. This nation is the richest of all the earth. Huge buildings of gold stand everywhere about. Jewels and precious stones form the pavements of the streets. The beauty of the scene and fertility of the soil were never equalled. And as for the maidens, man's eye never gazed upon perfection before. One's senses are lost in gazing, and one is enraptured to such a point that death is a small penalty to pay for having for one moment looked upon such superhuman beauty in life."

Is it to be wondered at that, after this, great armies were fitted out to conquer and despoil this fabulously rich kingdom? Yet one and all met with disastrous failure; the narrowness of the pass, together with the superb courage and skill of the men who guarded it, ever held Kaffiristan secure from invasion.

Within the last few years an English explorer, at the head of a company of Northern Hindoos and Arabs, made a desperate attempt to enter Kaffiristan by way of the hitherto impassable mountains on the Afghanistan side. Though deserted by his followers, without food, and obliged to endure innumerable hardships, he succeeded in reaching the plateau. Needless to say, he was immediately taken prisoner, and incarcerated in a dungeon, the horrors of which are not to be described. Two years later, after having been tortured and maimed for life by his captors, he was allowed to pass out into the world again. Thus was he made an example to all the civilized nations of the inhuman methods by which the inhabitants of Kaffiristan protect the isolation which they consider sacred.

To this brave explorer we owe the following story of Hakkouki, the only foreigner who has been allowed to enter this remarkable and, to their minds, holy sect.

Hakkouki, to-day, is a man of great power in the mountain kingdom of Kaffiristan, and, when the present monarch dies it is very probable that he will be made king. In such an event Kaffiristan will doubtless open its long-closed doors to civilization, but until then, there is little hope of adding much to our meagre knowledge of this strange country and its people.

CHAPTER I.

THE EXPEDITION.

HAKKOUKI was a Persian; a cousin twice removed from the royal house. During his boyhood, and indeed up to the time when circumstances led him to renounce his native land, he was the chosen companion of the Shah, himself a lad his elder by two years. Although a favorite at times, he was ever the young Shah's plaything; often knocked about, ill-treated, and insulted. And as time went on, Hakkouki was treated worse and worse; for while he sped on in his development like a young lion, the youthful ruler ceased to grow, and became jealous of his handsome companion. Yet so strong and lithe, dexterous and agile, was Hakkouki, that he could easily ward off or slip aside from the blows constantly aimed at him, or, what was often more necessary, avoid being spat upon by the royal boy.

The time which the Shah gave to developing his sharp tongue, Hakkouki spent in cultivating his character. His self-control became perfect; his tact, his ingenuity, his amiability, grew with every year, as did his kindness of heart and Christian forbearance. Notwithstanding his cousin's ill-usage and bad temper, Hakkouki always made excuses for him, and, in spite of all, loved him as a brother.

The noble nature of Hakkouki was not to be withstood. By degrees, the childish hatred of the royal youth diminished, and he began to admire and look up to his masterful companion. Even at the time of his most intense irritation, he would not be separated from him. When he had kicked and abused Hakkouki until the attendants induced him to try some other sport, he still insisted upon Hakkouki accompanying him.

Now Hakkouki was as handsome a boy as

the Persian sun ever shone upon. And as he grew, his beauty, tact, and influence increased to such an extent that at eighteen the throne was no longer safe for the Shah. He had become such a universal favorite, that there was actual danger that his followers would take him bodily and make him their ruler. At this point the Shah's councillors said, "Banish him"; but such was the Shah's love for Hakkouki by this time that he could not bear the thought of losing him.

Just at the time when an insurrection seemed imminent, something happened which decided everything quickly and definitely. Hakkouki was sent to the neighboring kingdom of Abdamousa for a beautiful princess whom the Shah desired to marry. When he was about to start upon the journey, the Shah, in final farewell, ordered brought forth a precious liquid with which he filled the small golden bottle which hung by a chain from Hakkouki's neck.

This bottle was an ornament, worn by

many of the nobles, for the purpose of carrying the sweet perfumes so much desired in Oriental life. Upon its surface was inscribed the words: "Death comes not to him who wears this talisman." The liquid with which the Shah filled it was said to possess, in its fragrance, a life-giving charm. Hakkouki bowed his head in tender gratitude for his cousin's solicitude, and rode away.

After nine days' journey he arrived at the palace of Abdamousa at sunrise. As he rode up to the entrance archway at the head of the escorting troops, he made a truly magnificent appearance. Mounted upon a massive Arabian stallion, with the rays of the sun glinting his armor, his weapons and trappings, and his young, handsome face aglow with youth and pleasure, he looked like a young god.

It happened that the Princess, looking down upon the scene from an upper window, saw this ideal lord; and, thinking that such a being could be no other than the

Shah himself, she ran swiftly down to greet him.

At the palace door, just as Hakkouki had reached it, the impetuous maiden threw herself into his arms, murmuring: "My lord! I am thine! To thee only will I be true; for in one moment I do love thee with all my nature."

Immediately terrible consternation prevailed. For these words were heard by the officers who had come as an escort. What was to be done? This story taken back to the court would so incense the Shah that the lives of Hakkouki and all the officers would be in danger.

Not for a moment did Hakkouki forget his mission, but the scene that followed was one calculated to test his firmness and loyalty.

The Princess was young and fair. She had been reared in an atmosphere of love and indulgence. Indeed, it was one of absolute devotion, wherein to wish was to have. Having signified her approval in this spontaneous manner, with all the innocence and sweetness of a child, she expected and awaited a reciprocal response.

Surprised that none came, she withdrew from his arms, but took his hand within her own and looked with wonder and inquiry into his face,—and then at the courtiers. What she saw puzzled and distressed her.

Upon all was an expression of dissent and protest, softened in Hakkouki's face by kindness and admiration.

As though in answer to their mute protest, clasping his hand to her bosom, she called out: "Nay, nay, tell me not 'tis not my lord. I'll be the bride of none but he."

In truth, the Princess could not comprehend the situation. Small wonder! Never in her bright life had she experienced denial or disapproval, and she was at a loss to know why any one should be perplexed or annoyed at her wish to espouse this fair young lord.

In vain her father endeavored to withdraw her into the palace that he might reason and explain.

At last they were forced to call the women, who, by persuasion and strategy, and at last the promise that she should be allowed to see him again within an hour, led her away.

The King of Abdamousa was much distressed. He ordered breakfast to be served, and took his guests to the banquet room to refresh themselves. There they discussed the best means of getting over the difficulty.

Of course, there was but one way out of it all. Silence under penalty of death for the soldiers, and force with the Princess. The tears streamed down the bronzed face of the old warrior King. As well use force with the rose which turns its beautiful, delicate face toward the sun. It could be done. The rose could be bent and tied down; it could be placed where there was no sun, and then — in a short time, there would be no rose either. This was his thought, and so the tears flowed freely. He glanced up at the saddened, but enchanting, countenance of the youth who sat opposite him.

"No wonder," he said to himself; "his beauty is irresistible."

In spite of all, the cruel decision was made; force must be used, and persuasion. To the women was this last duty allotted. They must tell her that Hakkouki was a bad, hardened courtier, who had merely been sent to filch her; a pauper, moreover, whose death would be ordered, if she persisted in her bewailing.

Alas! that such inventions should have been told the poor Princess. When she heard these things, her disappointment and humiliation were so great that she retired to her own chamber, took poison, and died.

To Hakkouki and his companions remained nothing but death, for to return without the bride, and with such an explanation, would be unpardonable. The very thought of the Shah's anger filled them with terror. Never could they return. Of what avail, only to die.

"We can go out into the world and conquer lands," said one of the young officers.

"Then we will return and lay them at the feet of our master, and he will forgive us," said another.

"We have soldiers, but little gold," said Hakkouki.

"Take my gold, take my treasure, take my army," said the wretched King of Abdamousa. "I have no need of any now. I go soon to join my dear one in the celestial paradise of eternity."

And thus it came about that Hakkouki, at the head of an army composed of the best fighters known about those parts, and possessed of the wealth of the realm, set out to conquer unknown lands.

Wandering through Persia toward the northeast, he, in time, reached the vicinity of the Elburz Mountains, which separated him from Afghanistan. He found the pass near Penjdeh, by which a few days' journey would take him across the border. Until this moment, the unhappy boy had scarcely breathed freely, for the sight of a horseman in the distance instantly brought fears of pursuit. The rage of the Shah upon hearing of the tragedy at Abdamousa's court Hakkouki could well imagine. For weeks it would be safe for none who entered his presence. At the same time, Hakkouki, in the kindness of his heart and love for his cousin, felt only the greatest sympathy for him in his terrible loss.

To lose such a sweet creature as the Princess, who clung to his neck for those few short moments, seemed to Hakkouki a fate so hard that he hung his head in sadness and woe.

Once over the border, he felt free from pursuit, having gained much time in starting so soon. He had sent three of his swiftest horsemen in advance to his friend Bokhatan, whose palace and lands were on the outskirts of Koodooz. Ever after, having left Penjdeh, he was daily expecting their return. The road to Koodooz was good and well travelled. Moreover, he had already passed signals placed by his horsemen, telling him that he was moving in the right direction. Bokhatan was well known to Hakkouki, having lived at the palace during his childhood. His wish for fame and adventure was such that Hakkouki felt he had only to tell him his determination for conquest to gain his aid and companionship.

It was necessary that Bokhatan should meet him soon after arriving in Afghanistan; for although the road upon which he travelled passed through a country which was not thickly settled, he nevertheless needed a friend, a native, to ease the fears of any one, who might see such a large army coming into their land. Wandering tribes, as they were generally in the outlying districts, paid little attention to him; but should the news reach Koodooz before Bokhatan was prepared to receive and assist him, trouble might accrue. All, however, went well. Bokhatan, overwhelmed with delight at the prospect, went in great haste to the King. He took with him the three swift horsemen, and in a few hours' audience gained the consent of the King to the use of the army. His plan was that Hakkouki and himself should combine to conquer the inhabitants of the mountainous fortress of Kaffiristan.

Wild enthusiasm possessed the city when the two armies under the leadership of Hakkouki, with Bokhatan as his chief general, sallied forth toward the east. Never in all the legends had such an army as this undertaken the expedition, and with two such men as Hakkouki and Bokhatan, such a thing as failure seemed impossible. But for all the bitter sadness that so many thousands of young and brave and handsome men should not have been victorious, to have opened up this longed-for country to civilization (as they called the life they led), to have possessed themselves of its treasure and enriched their courts at home, —for all the bitter sadness of it the hard fact remains, that they went only to meet death.

With the exception of Hakkouki, not one of this gay and spirited throng ever returned to tell his tale. Hundreds upon hundreds attacked the pass only to be thrown back to die with their horses, while this remarkable and overpowering guard still held the pass. Never was one man of them seen to fall. Death seemed impossible to them. While from Hakkouki's army new men constantly rode up to take the places of those who had fallen, the same ones stood on the opposing side to receive them. It was impossible to tell by how many they were reënforced from the rear, for the reason that the narrowness of the pass prevented.

Although Hakkouki had fought at the head of his men during the whole encounter, and Bokhatan had fallen in the early part of the attack, Hakkouki still fought on. He found himself at last apparently deserted, his horse killed under him, and the ground strewn with the bodies of his comrades heaped so compactly as to make an elevation on which he stood.

A dozen men swooped down upon him; he struggled for a moment, when stout bands of iron were thrown about his body, and in his one last moment of consciousness he felt himself dragged from his eminence on the bodies of his faithful men.

CHAPTER II.

THE MYSTERIOUS KINGDOM.

HOW long he remained unconscious, Hakkouki never knew. Whether he was already dead, was, for a long time, something of which he did not feel sure. But certainly, when next he breathed a breath of consciousness, it was as if he had been born again. One thought only possessed him: "How sweet is life!" For he was well convinced that this was life which he felt coursing through his system. This wonderful beauty which he saw before him was life. The sweet sounds which he heard all about him were life. He had no need to give thanks to his Maker in words for the precious gift which he had bestowed upon him, for his innermost feeling and thought, his mere breathing, were thanks in consciousness.

And such it is to live, for a baby who breathes its first breath, or for a youth from whom life seems to have been taken, and who comes back to its sweet seductions. But Hakkouki did not ask, "Where am I?" He did not care. He was surrounded by many people. He heard voices speaking in a language foreign to him, and he knew not whereof they spoke. He was lying upon a luxurious couch in a grand apartment, the ceiling of which, the draperies, and all that came to his view, were most magnificent.

He tried to rise, for he was curious to know who all these people were. He found it easy enough, easier than he had thought it would be. A scene of beauty and grandeur met his eyes, such as even he had never known. Many people talked together, and moved about, but took no notice of him. He looked down at himself, at his clothing, and he was amazed to find that he was clad in robes entirely different from any he had ever seen before. Moreover, his hands, which were usually bedecked with many jewels, were quite bare.

As he lay there, lost in wonderment, a sudden hush fell upon the people. They moved quickly to one side, and made an opening for some one to enter. Suddenly there appeared before Hakkouki's bewildered eyes a most beautiful girl, so much more beautiful than his imagination had ever pictured a girl could be, that he fell upon his knees before her in the most abject adoration. She put forth her hand, and uttering some word which he felt to mean "rise," he did so. She motioned him to sit upon the couch beside her. She made sounds with her beautiful lips, and he answered "Hakkouki." He repeated the sounds, and she said "Drusa." Then she leaned forward and kissed him.

There was no need to speak each other's language; the language of affection is one common to all. It does not go far, but it means a good deal as far as it goes.

And so it came to pass that, as Hakkouki was allowed perfect freedom of the palace, as he was never alone, even in his sleeping room having always an attendant, he soon learned sufficient of the language which they spoke to make himself understood. Once during each day, he was ordered to the great room where he had first seen the beautiful vision of Drusa. There each day, more words were spoken, and more thoughts exchanged. Never was any reference made to a life which he thought he had lived previous to this. Indeed, he was fast forgetting that any such time had ever existed.

Happiness complete reigned in Hakkouki's heart. Surrounded by all that was beautiful and luxurious, treated by all with the most extreme courtesy and respect, learning rapidly to speak in this musical and sweet-sounding language, and beloved by the most beautiful woman ever created, what more could he ask? Certainly no spirit of adventure dominated him now. Not for all the worlds to conquer would he leave even the palace, for fear that by some accident he should not find the way back.

At last, when he was well able to express himself, and could hold conversation very comfortably with all, he was summoned for the first time to dine in the banquet hall.

The King, whom he had never before seen, presided. As it was the custom at the court never to speak the name of a person unless he were present, Hakkouki had never even heard of him. The King, a man of noble bearing and kindly face, arose.

"Most honored enemy," said he, "during my illness, and while my daughter reigned, you have desired to visit my court. To you now, upon my return to my friends, I extend greeting, and on behalf of my daughter, the Princess, hospitality. Be seated."

The feast was one attended only by men. After the first remarks addressed to Hakkouki by the King, he turned his attention to others and left his guest to be entertained by those sitting near. He was constantly addressed by his name and initiated with the greatest consideration into the customs of this nation, a world by itself. He was told that it contained many cities, and much beautiful country, and also was he informed of the opportunity which would soon be presented to him to travel about on horseback and become acquainted with it.

All this was very interesting, and Hakkouki asked: —

"Have you lakes and winding rivers?"

"Yes, indeed, and, moreover, there is Lake Tinkash, a deposit of salt making the water buoyant, in which we bathe."

"How delightful!" said Hakkouki. "I have bathed in such water on the shores of the Caspian."

A sudden hush fell upon his neighbors.

"We know no such place," said his friend, quietly.

Whereupon Hakkouki opened his mouth to explain and describe, but in an instant six armed men stood behind his chair. His friend motioned them to go, saying to Hakkouki in a whisper, "We do not speak of Hades while Heaven lies within our grasp."

Hakkouki comprehended, and the soldiers dispersed. But he had learned his lesson, and from then on, no word escaped his lips, nor scarcely did a thought outside his delightful surroundings come to his mind. Much had he to take up his time. The young men with whom he was thrown, although luxuriously inclined, and fastidious in dress and personal care, at the same time gave much time and practice to games, and athletic cultivation.

Hakkouki soon learned that the weak and sick were beheaded at short notice, all males being examined at stated intervals, and those below the standard were dropped from the ranks. Women and children of the same physical order were allowed to live in homes erected for them, but marriage was forbidden them. Their lives were happy, much credit and fame often coming to them from the beautiful work created by them with the needle and the brush.

Hakkouki had often admired the wonderful physical development of the young men, but even then he had little knowledge how he outshone them all in strength and beauty. He never dared ask how he came to be alive; generally it was pleasant enough for him to know he was alive.

One day, his attendant, Domli, repeated the summons which daily gladdened his heart, that his presence was desired below. While making his toilet preparations, Domli suddenly whispered: —

"You're a happy man, sire."

"Oh, most certainly I am," said Hakkouki.

"You are beloved."

"Yes?" breathed Hakkouki.

Although he was told this each day in one way or another, still Hakkouki scarcely dared believe it. The joy seemed too great. Then Domli bent low over him, and said: —

"You will be wed."

He did not answer. Suddenly, the servant tottered, and almost falling into his arms, whispered with gasping breath: —

"She saved your life, she looked upon your face and saved you. Look upon mine and save me. I am not well; they will take my life to-morrow, and I love life just as you do. Save me!"

Hakkouki looked upon his face and saw the pallor. For the first time he realized how different Domli looked from any other man he had seen there, and raising him up, he said: —

"To-morrow, you say — so soon? I will try."

Now Domli looked indeed a most peculiar person. Strange, narrow black eyes had he. His hair was closely chopped, and perched upon his head was a tall red turban. This gave him a strange appearance, especially as his face was narrow and he had no ears. It was the custom to remove the ears from all prisoners taken from the besieging army. Few were ever allowed to live, but when one had performed some great act of heroism, life was allowed him. But that he might be always known as of a foreign race, this mark distinguished him. Domli wore long and trailing garments, which were highly and variously colored.

Although he had seemed at all times happy, previous to his illness, showing his fine large white teeth when smiling, he at the same time had a strange mysterious manner and always whispered. The language being without the sound of *s* gave a peculiar tone in whispers.

Sadly Hakkouki went to meet his beloved Drusa. To-morrow would soon be here, and he might never see Domli again. Hakkouki, possessed as he was of a tender and susceptible heart, found it difficult to accustom himself to the thought that this system was right or lawful. Then Domli was so faithful, and Hakkouki found he had a strong affection for him. Moreover, the Princess had not yet wed him, nor would she by to-morrow.

Now Domli had committed a sin in speaking of it to him, and he should commit a sin against hospitality in helping him.

However, he could not tell the Princess, as many people were present, and it certainly was not etiquette to do so. The conversation was limited to personal subjects and abstract thoughts, occupations, and story-telling. After the greeting of the Princess, Hakkouki suddenly could find no word to say. All allowable subjects flashed through his mind, and none but Domli came to his lips.

"You are not well, my love," spoke Drusa.

"Heavens! They would behead him," thought Hakkouki, turning pale.

"Ah, yes," said he, quickly. "I am well, quite well. I have been thinking of Lake Tinkash. I should much like to go for a few days to try the water."

"Most certainly; I will order an expedition," said the Princess.

"Ah, most gracious Princess, how can I thank you? I can go to-day, if it would please your highness."

"As you wish," said the Princess.

"But how can I leave you?" gasped Hakkouki.

Suddenly it seemed to him madness to think of going. Three days — how could he live to do it? Those few precious moments which were more than gold to him, — no, not to save his own life would he give them up; but poor Domli! He remembered his distressed face with its heartbreaking fear. To be sure he was not to be examined until to-morrow, and he might not be as ill as he thought, or might be better by to-morrow. But no, it would not be safe to wait. He must go, and go he did. Thereby he made a friend who years later and always would be to him more than can be easily procured in this world. A friend for life is no small thing to gain.

The salt bathing had a wonderfully invigorating effect on Domli's health. Three days later, he went quickly to be examined, and procured another lease of life.

A short time after this episode, while assisting at his toilet, Domli presented Hakkouki with a small golden talisman attached to a chain. Hakkouki knew it well. He had worn it in his previous life. Much pleased, he slipped the chain about his neck, and proceeded to the throne room, where he had been summoned. Here he found a great assemblage gathered. Many guests from all parts of the nation had arrived in honor of the birthday of the Princess. The great room was resplendent with jewels and fine garments. A magnificent dais was raised at the end of the room, upon which sat the King receiving his distinguished guests, and beside him the Princess, radiant in her youthful beauty.

Suddenly, in the midst of the reception, a swift change overspread the Princess's countenance, — the soft delicate features hardened into unnatural lines, the rose-coloring faded to a ghastly pallor, and she fell back into the attendant's arms. Terror held the spectators spellbound.

Was the Princess dying?

A strange death-like silence reigned. People stood about in groups, whispering with trembling lips. Awe-struck faces were to be seen on all sides, and everywhere were servants hurrying with noiseless feet to and fro, answering the calls for assistance. Certainly a terrible calamity had befallen this house; for all who lived at the palace loved the Princess devotedly, and to all present was she endeared by her beautiful nature. Was it death, — come so soon to snatch this fairest bud of all their race? No kingdom has the power to vanquish this most aggressive enemy. A wily fellow, whom giant mountains and unconquerable guards cannot forbid an entrance, who walks into the midst of the strongest, and with a light hand seizes upon their best beloved.

Hakkouki saw the consternation and terror of the people. In a moment he had dashed across to the group crowding about the Princess, as she was being lifted from the throne. Though fear was upon his classic features, he quickly took the golden bottle from his neck, and, opening it, dashed the contents over the fair face of the expiring Princess. All gazed in silence at this bold act. The next moment, however, they cried, "She lives!" The death-like pallor gave way to a movement of color beneath the waxen skin, the features relaxed, and the eyes slowly widened and fixed themselves upon the man who had grasped her from the hand of death. Then the beautiful lips parted and murmured, "Hakkouki!"

If Hakkouki was adored at the court before this event occurred, what was the feeling which these loving people had for him afterward? They bowed down in unspeakable worship when he passed. In a few days' time the Princess recovered her usual health and spirits.

One morning, soon after this event, Hakkouki received a summons to appear before the King in his council chamber. Seated before the august person of the King, were the judges and learned men of the realm. At first sight Hakkouki's heart quaked within him; for his guilty conscience immediately conjured up his connection with Domli's escape from death. But when the King spoke, all his fears were dispelled.

"Most honored Hakkouki! Thee do I greet, thee do I command to be honored in my kingdom."

Whereupon the learned men fell upon their knees about him, kissing the hem of his silken robe. A long, strange murmur proceeded from their lips, which Hakkouki had heard in the places of worship to their Deity, the ancestor in flesh and blood of the long line of kings who had reigned over their nation. From this Deity was the

Princess descended. In her veins flowed the blood of the Most High, and over this blood had Hakkouki the power to command its return to life when death was near—death, which in their religion was the enemy, the opposing force of their Deity. For by death only were their gods overpowered. Hakkouki had stayed the hand of death.

"Hakkouki," continued the King, "thy power is omnipotent. To thee do we bow, and thee do we request to make known to us the contents of the phial, with which thou hast overspread the fair face of my daughter. A most strange and fascinating odor, such as no man in Kaffiristan hath smelled, is said to have ensued from the liquid, filling the room with a rich, life-giving fragrance. Where hast thou this procured? Whence came this?"

"Most noble sire, that I know not. But were I permitted to speak of a time before I knew your enchanted kingdom, I could say where I had possessed it."

"To my ear alone is that possible to be spoken," said the King. Turning to his Council, "Leave us, my friends," said he; "hither will I call thee when all is known."

Left alone, Hakkouki narrated to the King his custom of wearing always upon his neck the golden bottle during his life in Persia. It had been given him by his mother when a babe, and was filled each day by the steward of the palace from the perfumes of his relative, the Shah.

"Whence come they, I know not, but, most honored sire, I love your daughter; I would wed her, and to make myself noble, to be worthy of her precious love, I would accomplish this small service. I would go forth beyond your kingdom, to the ends of the uncivilized world would I go, to probe the mountains, to devastate the fields, to fathom the depths of the bottomless seas, and of all that lies beyond would I make myself informed, in order that I might add to your fair country a new delight in the knowledge of perfumes; and give pleasure and satisfaction to you and your fair daughter. Being successful, — for in such a quest could no man fail, — I ask your word that she shall be my wife."

"It is to my kingdom's honor, most noble Hakkouki, that we have inspired the love and homage of such a man as thou art. Thou shalt go upon thy travels, and thou shalt learn of all the strange liquids used with such remarkable power. Of these things have we never known. And thou shalt bring to this nation the wealth of this wonderful science. We, who have been exalted above all living things, may come to find that we may learn from these poor wretches of barbarity, as we before have learned the science of life from poor, creeping, crawling, and degraded things. In the hands of a noble being as thou art, ignoble things become noble. Thou shalt have all aid in thy undertaking that treasure can give, but thou must go alone. I call the judges back to hear the decision we have made."

It being settled, therefore, that Hakkouki should go out into the world in search of the one only charm this remarkable country lacked, he made preparations at once, and in something less than a month made his departure. As he rode out by the mountain pass where he had so valiantly fought for entrance, he was escorted by the whole populace. No conquering hero ever rode in greater state. He was mounted upon a snow-white charger, the most beautiful to be procured in the kingdom. This animal alone was to be his companion beyond the mountain walls. He was dressed in the garments which he wore when captured, for Domli had unearthed them, having buried them long ago in a sealed urn in the wild solitudes of the mountains. His love for his master had made it impossible for him to destroy by fire, as he had been ordered, these garments, hallowed by contact with his beloved person.

This offence of Domli's was forgiven, as these garments were much desired by the

King's Council, they having decided it far wiser to send Hakkouki forth clad as a being of the outer world. Much time and consideration had been spent in striving to construct a set of garments in imitation of such as they had never seen. Their satisfaction was complete when Domli produced these much-coveted clothes. To them was added a lining of fine and strong kid, embroidered in quiltings by the marvellous handiwork of the women. In these quiltings were encased diamonds and other jewels of inestimable value, that Hakkouki might lack for nothing which treasure could procure while wandering among barbarians. This wealth increased the weight of his clothing to a considerable degree, but Hakkouki was a strong and powerful man, and his heart was light.

When Hakkouki went forth, no weight felt he, for hope bounded exultantly within him. He went to win honor for her, his fair princess, and his heart beat with wild throbs as he pictured to himself his delight upon returning to his bride. Of the perils of his quest no thought had he, only of the glory of his return, — a man honored to equal her position, who had shown his valor in pursuit of her wish, and able to feel himself worthy of her.

CHAPTER III.

THE ROSE GARDENS.

STANDING in the elevated and narrow pass, Hakkouki turned and faced the people of Kaffiristan, his friends and worshippers, once his most bitter enemies. Pulling his horse up for a moment, he sat silently waving his plumed helmet, and listened to the wild cheers and cries of farewell. The vision the last to meet his gaze, was the lovely person of his Drusa, seated in her litter in all her glorious beauty, waving him a blessing with her dainty hand.

He turned quickly and rode on over the grass-grown mounds, where his comrades of two years ago had fallen.

Two years had he loved and been loved,

never venturing to ask her hand in marriage, until such time as he felt himself her equal by having won honor for her. Two years had sufficed to remove all memory of events which had occurred before his entrance into this fairyland. Happiness had filled his heart, and life had been to him full of all which makes what we call time. Moreover, as time in Kaffiristan was counted by another schedule than any he had ever been accustomed to, it was not until after he had returned to Persia that he was able to judge how long a time had elapsed since his departure.

Throughout the day he rode on toward the west, feeling neither hunger nor fatigue. In the panniers of his saddle he found food which had been placed there to provide for his needs until he should arrive where he might buy more. This would probably be but a short time, for he knew well that he should come upon the temporary settlement of some wandering tribe as soon as he had travelled over the mountains. That night he camped in the forest. He slept heavily and long and when he awoke it was with the feeling that some one was near him. Soon brought to his senses by the thought of the valuable cargo upon his person, and knowing full well the thieving instincts of these wandering tribes, he quickly grasped his knife to protect himself. Standing, he looked about him, but could see nothing, although he plainly heard the crunching of dry sticks in the timber behind.

He decided, as it was dawn, and the air cool and bracing, that he would breakfast and move on. Rapidly he rode along, stopping during the hottest part of the day, and sleeping wherever he found himself when night fell, until he reached a small town on the outskirts of Koodooz. He could not bear the thought of entering the town; for in these last days of travel, he had thought much of his old friend

Bokhatan, now no more. And what seemed to his tender, loving heart more tragic yet, was that he previously was bent upon the conquest of that nation, now to him most dear, where lived his sweet Drusa and her noble father.

This was the country which was now the only goal for him to strive for. He made stops in Afghanistan only where the need of food required it, for he was anxious to press on into Persia. Having crossed the frontier, he was still more anxious to arrive in the vicinity of the court where his boyhood had been passed. Remembering clearly the sad tragedy which had forced him to leave this country, he naturally had no thought of going to the palace.

As all of his companions on his journey to Abdamousa's court had been slain in battle, there were few who could know him, and few of his friends remained. While riding along alone he had thought much; and things long since forgotten returned to his mind. In recalling the friends whom he had known, and who might still remain true to him, his old master in books came nearest to his heart. He it was who had helped him to decipher the manuscripts which were considered necessary to be read by a youth, and which constituted his education.

Camduatim lived in what might be called a chalet on the hillside overlooking the town. With him Hakkouki determined to make his residence, during which time he should be able to procure whatever knowledge was necessary toward fulfilling the mission upon which he had been sent. Hakkouki arrived at the chalet of Camduatim late at night. The house was situated on the side of a hill not far from the palace, and overlooking it. Hakkouki had especially timed his arrival in the city that he might pass through it after dark, as he did not wish to be recognized by any of his former acquaintances.

Up the dark and straggling path Hakkouki clambered, having been obliged to dismount, as the night was too dark to see where the road made its sharp turns. Much of the day he had walked beside his horse, talking quietly to this one companion of his journey, who was more than dear to him from his association with the Princess, who had selected him herself.

Hakkouki with difficulty found the low entrance to the house of Camduatim. The two doors joined in the middle from top to bottom, and opened from the outside. But when Hakkouki pressed upon them, some obstacle within prevented them opening. The obstacle was in the form of a very heavy and sleepy man, who lay stretched across what would have been the threshold, had there been one. In reality there was only the paved courtyard within, the same as outside, ancient and irregular, hard and cold, but apparently luxurious to the sleeper.

"Camduatim! Camduatim!" called Hakkouki.

In time much noise and confusion, commands and cries, were heard in language which Hakkouki had not spoken for so long; and which to his unaccustomed ear seemed strange and harsh. Ah! How different from the soft tones in the household of his sweet Drusa!

A small gleam of light appeared in the opening, and a crowd of people filled the inner court. They were servants who slept in their daily clothing, ready at all moments to protect their master's house against intruders.

"Who art thou?" called a voice from within. But this question Hakkouki would not answer, for his person was not safe in Persia.

Since he would not give his name, Camduatim was not aroused, nor would he be for an unknown wanderer. Whereupon Hakkouki began, in his strong, deep-toned voice, to sing the sweet ballads of his youth, which Camduatim had himself taught him. The din in the courtyard ceased while Hakkouki sang, but at the end of the song the noise began again, and Hakkouki could hear the sound of weapons clanking on the stones, when suddenly the doors were opened, and his errand asked of him. For answer he took up his refrain again, and suddenly his heart was gladdened by the voice of Camduatim, speaking in French, the language used much at the court, and not known to servants.

"Ah, fair youth, where art thou? My beloved son, for whom I have longed this many a day. Quickly will I come to give thee entrance!"

Soon he appeared in the doorway, and Hakkouki felt himself held in the welcoming embrace of the old man. All night the two friends sat in converse. Hakkouki told Camduatim of his experience after having left the court, of the tragedy at Abdamousa's palace, of his friend Bokhatan, and their battle for conquest, of the wonderful kingdom he had visited, and his hope to win his bride by fulfilling the mission upon which he had been sent.

Camduatim was a man well versed in the old-time lore. He was, moreover, a friend of the man who procured for the court all sweet scents and perfumes, from whom he was sure Hakkouki could learn all which was known to the world.

This man was old Ulema, a native of the Ural district, who for many years had supplied the Persian court with perfumes from foreign lands. He lived in an old deserted palace in the mountains above Tokat, in Turkey, and the final more delicate processes in the preparation of these luxuries were thought, by Camduatim, to take place in the old palace.

It was a long and wearisome journey through the mountainous district to Tokat, and Camduatim would not allow Hakkouki to think of setting out alone. Though Hakkouki was impatient to be off, he was much delighted by the prospect of Camduatim's companionship.

Accordingly, servants were sent ahead with provisions, to wait for them in the lonely stretches where villages were far apart, and they took the road together.

"My son," said Camduatim, when they were nearing the end of their journey, "I have not thought it best to make known to thee previously the danger of meeting with robber tribes. But we are nearing Tokat, and about this region the lawless men of the border are prone to plunder at will. Much discretion must we now use, travelling at night and in silence."

They passed places which had recently been used as camps by large numbers of men, and upon entering Tokat, found the town in an uproar. The robbers, composed of many tribes, had made a combined effort to plunder the city. The panic-stricken inhabitants were driven from their houses, and the property of the rich stolen. These people robbed were principally Armenians, a race foreign to the Mohammedans in their religion, who are hated by them, and their riches coveted. The disturbance of the town allowed Camduatim and Hakkouki to pass through it unknown and unquestioned. They made their way quickly to the outskirts, where, by the mountain path, they might proceed to Ulema's castle.

At last, in a sheltered spot, they rested to recover from the awful sights of pillage and bloodshed which they had lately witnessed. The horrors recalled to Hakkouki the memory of his battle at the entrance to Drusa's kingdom. The life among these peace-loving people had banished from his mind all thoughts of conquest of other's rights, or even of dissension with his fellow-beings.

"And this," said Hakkouki, "was what I called civilization when I went forth to conquer barbarians in the region of the Kaffiris."

"Civilization is Heaven," said Camduatim.

"And I have found it in my enchanted kingdom," answered Hakkouki.

But old Camduatim shook his head sadly,

for Hakkouki's wild enthusiasm for his adopted country seemed to Camduatim bordering on madness.

Just as the sun was fading behind the distant hills, leaving its brilliant afterglow in the sky above, Hakkouki and Camduatim came suddenly upon the palatial ruin where lived Ulema. Crowning the summit of the hill, in magnificent isolation stood the ivy-grown structure. Before the great entrance, on the courtyard overgrown with weeds, Ulema walked, deep in thought, alone.

"Nola! Ulema!" called Camduatim.

Extending both arms in welcome, with a brilliant smile lighting his old and withered visage, Ulema hurried toward them.

"Most beloved friend, welcome!" said he, "and thou, fair youth, art thou from Heaven direct?"

"Indeed, I am that," said Hakkouki, laughing, for throughout his whole being he felt he lived only in the memory of his beloved country and the hope of his return to it. But Camduatim dispelled the old man's wonder.

"'Tis my pupil, Hakkouki, Ulema, come with me to learn of thee more than I can teach. Thy knowledge of sweet scents and thy craft in such."

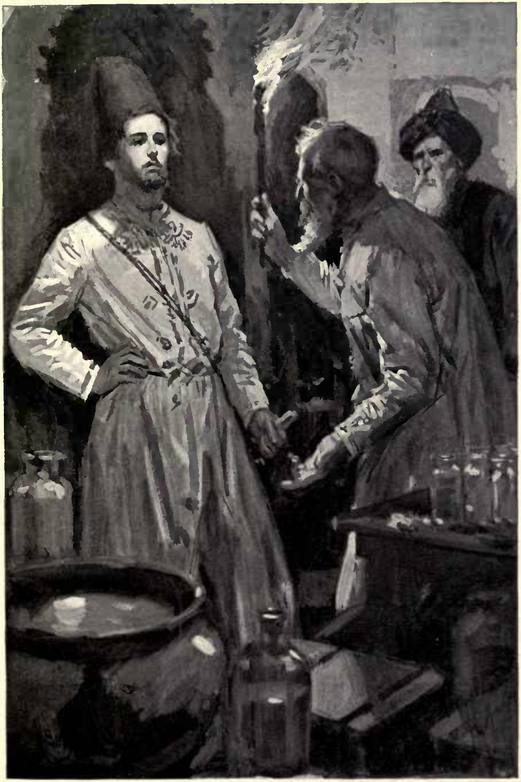
Passing through a long-deserted banquet hall, where stood the huge black table about which boisterous men had gathered in far-distant times, they were ushered into the great entrance room. Opening from one side a small door led into the apartments of Ulema, which looked quite cosey after the dreary appearance of the great hall. There were couches upon which several might sleep, and low tables from which many might be fed; for hospitality reigned in Ulema's mansion.

"A welcome to thee, my friends," said Ulema.

He knelt and bathed their feet himself, and then cooked a meal in their presence. His delight at seeing his old friend again was almost childish.

When supper was over, Hakkouki was anxious to know what Ulema advised, and he listened with impatience to the reminiscences of the two older men. Camduatim, ever ready to understand the wishes of those about him, soon suggested the object of their visit, whereupon Ulema, carrying a torch, led them through the banquet hall to the other side. Here they passed into his laboratory. Strange and weird it seemed, lighted by the flickering torch held high in Ulema's right hand. Hakkouki soon became interested in all which Ulema told him of the materials with which he worked. Everything seemed ancient, dating back to a time long since passed; for the same laboratory had been in use in the days when the old palace was full of life and youth and gayety.

This science is one long known, and which has changed little in all the ages. Perfumes are to-day made just as they were three thousand years ago. New ones have been added, and new combinations of the old, but the essence of the rose, the violet, the lily in its purity, have no need of change. Great quantities of the material prepared for transportation in its crude form were packed at one end of the room, in the respective casks, bottles, or horns, whatever is best adapted for shipment. A great caldron stood near by, into which the bags of rose petals were emptied to be pickled in brine. This crystallizes on the surface of the petal, and preserves it for an indefinite time. Here were casks of alcohol to mix with the otto, or, as it is sometimes called, "attar"; here also were horns of civet, used with other scents to give them strength. These horns were covered at the wide end with leather, sewn with rawhide, and stopped at the small end with wooden plugs. Here were ambergris packed in jars, small Chinese caddies of musk, bottles of ylang-ylang, tins of vanilla, and bottles of patchouli, violet, and jasmine, all of which were sought after by the luxurious people of the Persian court,



"STRANGE AND WEIRD IT SEEMED, LIGHTED BY THE FLICKERING TORCH."

for whom only Ulema blended his enchanting perfumes.

In one small flask, to be sent to the court, was a perfume of greater value than ten times its weight in gold. Ulema showed Hakkouki all which could be seen by the light of the dim torch, and early next morning he resumed his teaching.

At the end of a week, when Ulema had explained the processes and taught Hakkouki all that he could learn without practical experience, Hakkouki said to the old man: —

"Father, what must I do to be a master in this art?"

"My son," returned Ulema, "if thou wouldst know this art as no other man hath ever known it, thou must go out into the world and study each perfume from its beginning. Thou must visit every land which produces a perfume, trace that perfume to its source, and learn by experience its true value and uses. I am now an old man, and such an undertaking as this is beyond me, but for you, who are young and ambitious, the task should not be impossible."

"That, then, shall be my mission," said Hakkouki.

Delighted that Hakkouki was so much in earnest, Ulema proceeded to tell him what he knew of the localities and productions.

"But whither first?" asked Hakkouki.

Camduatim suggested China for musk, or the Indian Ocean for the lily of the Philippines.

"The violet is most beautiful," said Hakkouki. "Why not France?"

Ulema remained silent.

"Which shall it be, Ulema?" asked Hakkouki.

With the light of youth in his old eyes, Ulema bent toward them, and speaking in his low, musical voice he said: —

"The rose, the rose it must be first. I am old; I know not how long thou wouldst tarry, and I would know of the rose first." Much interested in his subject, he continued: "The rose grows everywhere, and is cultivated for its perfume in many places, but nowhere in such profusion as in Bulgaria. The mother of my beloved wife was a Turkish woman from across the sea [meaning European Turkey in distinction from Asiatic], and she dressed her little one in the native costume of Bulgaria. Roses, always roses, were the little one's delight. A rosebud she was herself, but never a rose, for she was taken from me in our early life. Yet I am not alone, for her rose-like presence lives within my heart."

Silence ensued, broken only by the old man's sandals. For he had risen in his gentle emotion and paced the room slowly.

"Then," said Hakkouki, rising to his feet, "the rose it shall be. I will go first to Bulgaria."

The old man, without words in answer, went to his cupboard and brought therefrom an earthen jug bearing a peculiar label. Placing it upon the table, he went again and brought strange earthen mugs. He filled them with a white liquor from the jug, and handed one each to Hakkouki and Camduatim. Then lifting his own mug, he said:—

"Let us drink to the success of the trip in old Bulgarian raki."

It was a solemn occasion to old Ulema, and his heart was stirred deeply.

Early the next morning they set forth. Camduatim and his suite were to travel with Hakkouki to Sentari, whence he should cross the Bosphorus to Constantinople. Ulema went with them to the pass, to bid them good-by.

"Good luck, and a speedy return!" called he, his face aglow with kindness.

The journey to Sentari was long and tedious, and during the first part so perilous that they travelled chiefly at night. Arriving in Sentari, Camduatim looked about to find a residence for himself, for he had determined to await Hakkouki's return in that city.

"My son, thou must change thy dress,"

said he. "For travellers in Europe had best not be too Oriental in their clothing."

A change, indeed, it was when Hakkouki appeared with his hair and beard shorn, and a foreign dress in ill accord with his picturesque style. These things, however, troubled him little, for he was without vanity. His valuable clothing he left in Camduatim's care, and was thereby relieved of its weight. Even the shoes, of American make, which he had bought, did not disturb him, so enthusiastic was he in his undertaking.

After an affectionate farewell to Camduatim, Hakkouki took train through Constantinople to Philippopolis. Throughout this section were rose gardens in great abundance, but Hakkouki wished to visit those of Kasanlik, where the rose is preeminent for its beauty, and where the whole country is one great garden. The best mode of conveyance was a carriage drawn by four horses, which by stopping one night at Kalofer (fifty miles north of Philippopolis) gave him a whole day's driving amidst the most beautiful scenery. The gardens, being protected by the Balkan Mountains from the cold north winds, produce a most luxuriant growth.

He arrived in Kasanlik at night, and went directly to the house of M. Ismahan, a Bulgarian who spoke French and owned one of the largest gardens. Although the family had retired, he was expected and greeted by the servant in waiting, who gave him refreshments and showed him his sleeping apartment.

The next morning a light tap on the door awakened him. He dressed as quickly as his unaccustomed garments would allow, and stepped immediately into the great plank-lined living room. The room was lighted from the roof above, and had doors leading to all other parts of the house, and benches covered with cushions along the walls. There were no chairs, decorations, nor pictures, but merely cupboards in the walls filled with curios and works of art.

Mme. Ismahan, seated upon the bench, bowed and smiled in a friendly manner, but spoke no French. The raki was offered first of all.

"I have already tried your famous raki," said Hakkouki to his host. "We drank the success of my journey in it before I left Turkey."

M. Ismahan was much interested; but when Hakkouki told him that old Ulema had married the daughter of a Bulgarian woman, he was not surprised, for no Bulgarian marriage could be celebrated without raki. The table was decorated with roses, and even the small maid who served them had roses in her veil, which all the women wear for a headdress.

After breakfast M. Ismahan conducted Hakkouki to the gardens. Roses, roses, everywhere, hanging from above, and carpeting the ground upon which they trod; baskets heaped with them, and carts drawn by small buffalo laden with them, wreaths of roses upon the women's heads, and bunches thrust within the bows of their apron strings; all save one girl wore roses.

"Anita, come," called M. Ismahan.

The girl whom Hakkouki noticed had no decorations came in answer.

"Show M. Hakkouki about, and tell Hondago to make preparations to receive him at the distillery."

This plan had been agreed upon at breakfast, as Hakkouki wished to spend all his time among the roses, that no part of the process of converting their fragrance into a form which could bear transportation should be lost to him. The "fair Anita," as she was called in the village, looked shyly up at him, and said in her dialect: —

"Good morning."

Hakkouki made answer "Bon jour," and thereafter Anita always said "Bon jour." Then she beckoned him to follow and led the way.

She was a pale, delicate girl, particularly so beside her ruddy-faced comrades, dressed in the highly colored and picturesque costume of the peasants. They greeted Hakkouki with smiling faces as he passed, and sang merrily at their work.

When Anita found Hondago in charge of a large number of gatherers, she made known to him M. Ismahan's orders, and they all walked together through the fields of roses to the distillery.

Distillation formerly was performed in the open air; but as at present the business is carried on so extensively, and the localities are subject to severe thunder-storms, the caldrons are under the cover of rude sheds, open in front. These buildings are called "hapus." Here Hakkouki found to his great comfort a Frenchman in charge.

"It gives me much pleasure," said he, bowing low, "to explain to you the process, M. Hakkouki. Pray be seated and partake of some coffee."

Just behind the great caldrons, six in number, stood a small table where coffee was ready to be served. The Frenchman talked constantly while Hakkouki drank his coffee.

Hondago and Anita cast sly glances at each other, and seemed well content to be left to their own society. The heat of the braziers under the caldrons was intense, and Hakkouki also found that the customary coffee at ten o'clock on a hot morning was not particularly agreeable.

Hakkouki rose and stood without the shed beside the Frenchman, who talked incessantly.

"Yes, we put many bushels of roses to the value of one hundred pounds in English money into the caldrons at once. These are previously half filled with warm water, which is kept at an even temperature, and regulated by a thermometer. They must be tightly covered."

"What passes through these tubes?" asked Hakkouki. For from the cover of each caldron were iron tubes running to an open trough of tin filled with cold water.

"That is the vapor from the roses," said the Frenchman. "It passes into the water and drops from the troughs into the large glass bottles which you see placed to receive it." The man seemed much delighted that he had so attentive a listener. "It requires three distillations before the oil from the rose vapor rises to the top of the water in the troughs. This is run into leaden bottles, hermetically sealed, and it is ready for shipment."

"And that," said Hakkouki, "is the pure perfume of the roses in the form of oil."

He bade the Frenchman good day, and to tell the truth, was as much pleased to return to his untalkative companions Anita and Hondago, as he had been a short time before to meet the garrulous Frenchman. There was something particularly enjoyable to Hakkouki in the silent companionship of these two, who spoke no word while he was near. He understood them well, without the use of words. How much their faces and gestures meant! How easy for him to make known his wishes to them, and in the meantime the restful peace of the gardens spoke volumes to him. Hakkouki wished to know all which concerned the cultivation of the rose, its best soil and all the climatic and agricultural conditions and necessities. Much of this Hondago knew and could show him.

Hakkouki liked to lie upon a heap of roses, and watch these light-hearted and sunny-faced workers, as they packed the roses in great bags to be sent away for distillation elsewhere. Day after day he stayed on, and the "fair Anita," who lived at M. Ismahan's house, and often served at table, went each day back and forth with him to the rose gardens. Here he would often lie upon his fragrant bed and dream. It was all so beautiful, this fairyland of roses. He listened to the merry songs of the gatherers, and read from their faces their lives. Here was a woman bending down, clipping the roses quickly from the stems, while a small child seated beside her twisted the roses in and out the coarse home-made lace of her chemisette.

"Ah! how happy I am," said the woman's face. "Here is my baby, whom I love, and there, in the field, just within my sight, is her father. Ah! how happy we are!" And the merry voice carolled its joy, just as a bird carols its song of life and love and happiness.

Hakkouki loved to watch their glances, and find who were united in families, who by marriage, and who soon would be by marriage. In the last category he placed Hondago and the fair Anita.

One day, lying there watching her, he said to himself, "And why does she not wear a wreath of roses as the other women do? She would look so pretty in it. The bright color would light up her fair face." And so he plucked some of the smallest, pinkest buds, and twined their stems together. It was a pleasant task, and when Anita came to him, telling him it was time to go, he rose, and placed the wreath upon her head. Then he stood back to admire, but the fair Anita had grown suddenly fairer. In an instant she had turned as pale as death. As she looked him fairly in the eyes, however, the bright red color leaped into her face, and her eyes darted a strange shy glance at him. Though she let the wreath remain on the homeward walk, the telltale color overspread her countenance as she passed her comrades, and instead of singing in her usual merry way, she grew silent. Hakkouki, interested as he was in acquiring information, going about among the farmers of the surrounding country, and studying the growth of the rose, thought no more about the episode of the wreath.

He was therefore much amazed one evening, when, passing Cloister Trojan, he was suddenly seized from behind, and in an instant thrust through a small door into the monastery. Here he was thrown to one side into a dark cell, and the doors shut upon him. He felt he was alone, but as his eyes became accustomed to the darkness, he saw a skull, beside it another, and yet another, and then he saw that the end of the cell was heaped with skulls, from floor to ceiling. It was a grewsome picture, and to Hakkouki a particularly painful one. So full of life and youth was he, that death seemed an unreal and far-away thing. He listened, and heard in the distance the peal of an organ, and many male voices chanting "Gospodin pomilui" (God help us).

Hakkouki moved in the direction of the sounds, and finding the door, he threw himself fiercely against it. It gave way easily before his vigorous strength. Still guided by the music, he felt his way along a dark corridor, until he found another door. This opened into a dimly lighted chapel, where, upon their knees, the forty-five monks of the Brotherhood knelt, repeating "Gospodin pomilui."

"Trapped," said Hakkouki to himself. There seemed to him no possible chance of escape from the place. Though M. Ismahan would doubtless undertake his release when he heard of his plight, delay was certain, and in the meantime he knew not what to expect.

When the brothers rose from their devotions, one of them, Brother Partenije by name, walked in a leisurely and dignified manner toward Hakkouki.

"Thou art Hakkouki," said he in French, without showing any surprise. "Thou hast been sent here to expiate thy crime."

"Pray what is my crime?" asked Hakkouki, much astonished.

"Ah! dost thou not know?" In a kindlier tone he continued, "With us, when a girl's hand is being sought in marriage, she wears no wreath; but when she has given her answer, the chosen man has the right to place one upon her head. Any man who infringes on the courtesy due his brother, while he is waiting for his answer, is a coward. You have won the bride, and the notice of your betrothal is placed upon the parish church; but Hondago is not a man to be so vilely used. So good and true and devout is he in his adherence to the forms of the church, that we have taken charge of you to protect him."

"I did not know the custom," said Hakkouki. "I had no thought of tempting Anita. I placed the wreath upon her head for beauty's sake alone."

And Brother Partenije believed him.

"Show me the notice of my betrothal, and I will make it right," said Hakkouki.

The monk hesitated for a moment, and then he led Hakkouki out into the night. After a long walk they reached the small chapel of the parish. There hung the notice surely, placed there by the parish Father: "Hakkouki weds Anita at close of mass on Monday."

For in Bulgaria the maiden sets the day.

Hakkouki got out of his scrape by inducing the monk to make a change in the placard. The following morning this notice met the astonished gaze of the passers-by: "Hondago weds Anita at close of mass on Monday."

"For," reasoned the practical Brother Partenije, "since she has given her answer by allowing Hakkouki's wreath to remain upon her head, she is ready for marriage."

Hakkouki wended his way homeward, reaching there just before daybreak, but for a long time he was unable to free himself from the grim impression which the cloister had produced upon him.

"Thou art late," said M. Ismahan, when Hakkouki entered the living room. These friendly people constantly made use of the familiar "thou" in addressing Hakkouki. "I had thought of showing thee my store-room."

So, leading the way after breakfast through one of the many doors, they entered the room where the value of many thousands of dollars was kept. This was in the form of "otto." The liquid was generally sealed in leaden bottles, but there were some small glass ones which showed the deep gold color of the oil. The glass bottles were reserved for Eastern use, the contents of which will keep for eighty years in good condition. The leaden ones were for shipment to London, Paris, and all the great centres of perfume manufacturing. The strong subtle odor, although pleasant at first, soon became oppressive, and produced giddiness in the head.

Strange to say, the peasants dislike the perfume which they themselves manufacture. It clings tenaciously even in the open air. A thousand different scents a few drops of this thick rich oil have in them.

Hakkouki was very grateful to M. Ismahan for all the attention he had shown him, and the opportunities he had given him to obtain the information he desired, though he was much distressed by the incident of the wreath. He was anxious to find an opportunity for explaining his ignorance of their customs, and regret for what had happened through it, when upon entering the living room Anita walked toward them. There was no appearance of embarrassment about her, as upon former occasions. She spoke to M. Ismahan, who in turn said to Hakkouki: —

"Anita tells me she is to marry Hondago on Monday, and wishes you to dance at her wedding."

This delighted Hakkouki, as he had already heard of the "Horadantz," as they called it. Moreover, he was overjoyed that Anita was so "reasonable."

His experience with the daughter of the King of Abdamousa had led him to fear a similar possible upheaval among these quiet people in Bulgaria. "They are certainly more civilized," said Hakkouki to himself. And then he wondered if it were better so. He was fast becoming educated by his travels, and was already beginning to moralize.

Anita's wedding was delightful. The girls in their white veils and chemisettes, heavily embroidered, short skirts and brilliantly colored aprons, with their massive ornaments on neck and belt, fairly radiated joy from their merry faces. After the ceremony, the procession, passing under the extended arms of Brother Partenije, who blessed the marriage, broke into groups before the church.

Then the young people formed circles, and danced on the green to the music of the shrieking flutes and bagpipes. The gay spirits of the company knew no bounds. The young men in short jackets and full breeches to the knee, red sashes bound tightly about their white shirts, stood each between two girls. They joined in line, not by hands, but by catching the fingers under the sashes of their next neighbors. The little children danced behind them in a circle, throwing long ropes of roses about the heads and shoulders of those in front. Never was a girl happier than the fair Anita upon her wedding day.

The following day Hakkouki was to leave, but the sky shed tears of woe that he was to be known in this friendly village no more. So M. Ismahan induced him to stay another day, saying:—

"The heavens weep indeed, and our hospitality will not permit us to allow you to depart in discomfort."

To compensate for the gloomy and wet day, all nature's influences combined to make Hakkouki's regrets more poignant by bathing this beautiful valley the next day in the peculiarly glorious sunshine which follows a storm in that region. There was exhilaration in the light, crisp air. Hakkouki, with half the village to bid him "Godspeed," took his seat in the same heavy vehicle, drawn by four horses, in which he had entered the town. The same policemen rode one on each side of him, and his picturesque driver, in his short fur jacket, which is worn at all seasons, climbed to his seat. He cracked his whip, and Hakkouki turned his head to hide the tears which sprang to his eyes in leaving his dear friends. Down the highroad, over the rough pavements they rattled. Waving caps and friendly farewells greeted his eyes and ears on all sides, and his last view was one of beauty and good-fellowship.

A golden haze hung over the rain-bedewed valley, and the wet rosebuds, opening their hearts to the sun, perfumed the air with their heavy sweetness. The buffaloes slowly trundled the creaking carts over the damp grass, but the horses which drew Hakkouki flew on at a breakneck speed, never holding up even when crossing the numerous bridges. More powerful and enduring are these bridges than those of many other parts of the world. The unenclosed rose fields stretched for miles on either side. Hakkouki enjoyed every moment of the delightful journey. As he lay back in the carriage, he dreamed of his future and Drusa, and was happy in the thought that every hour, every mile, brought him nearer to her.

Suddenly he heard the driver's "Brrr, brrr," and the carriage came to a full stop. Quick, anxious words, though meaningless to Hakkouki, were exchanged. He thrust his head out of the window, and saw a boy, evidently a beggar, pale with fright, wildly beseeching help and pointing to the side of the road. Hakkouki stepped out of the carriage, and going in the direction which the boy pointed, found a woman lying there apparently in great distress.

"Ah! Monsieur," said the boy, "the driver says you speak only French, and I speak so little. My mother is French, and she suffers so. She is dying, I think."

Near them was a pile of poor and much-used furniture, together with the scanty pots and pans of housekeeping. Hakkouki knew the situation. A family turned out of house and home for non-payment of the church tax;

for still the Greek church requires the tax law to be enforced, especially on the many Catholics who have come into the province. Failing to pay it, they are quickly turned out, and the house occupied by a family of the Greek church.

"Yes," said the unfortunate woman, "I am dying. God help my boy." And she clasped her hands in agony.

"Lift her into the carriage," said Hakkouki to the driver.

They made her as comfortable as possible, and Hakkouki and the boy sprang quickly in.

"Drive on!" called Hakkouki.

They stopped at the "hahu" of Mehala for food and rest, but were unable to procure more than temporary accommodation for the poor woman. Here Hakkouki had hoped to leave her to die in peace, but the family were afraid of ill-luck coming to them, should a Catholic die in their house. The good food and rest, however, had a beneficial effect upon both the woman and François, as she called him, and enabled her to bear the journey to Kalofer, where Hakkouki knew he could procure a permanent resting-place for her at the convent. The driver, with his cap on one side, and cigarette in his mouth, looked askance at this "taking up of beggars to ride like princes," but Hakkouki was not a man to be questioned as to his acts.

They drove direct to the convent and were received in the courtyard by the mayor of the town, whom M. Ismahan had notified of Hakkouki's passage through the town. Great was his astonishment to behold the beggar woman so carefully assisted and placed in the care of the good nuns.

"She is dying," said Hakkouki, simply.

"Gospodin pomilui," said the mayor.

These words brought very forcibly to Hakkouki the memory of his experience in the cell of skulls. He shuddered as he thought of it. They entered the receiving room of the convent, with its chill and uninviting appearance. Here they waited until they should hear that the woman had been made comfortable, and then with François crossed to the hotel leading from the same courtyard.

François was a handsome boy of fifteen. His father had been a Bulgarian. With his great eyes upon Hakkouki, he had sat in silence during the day's ride. Now, as he was given a place at the table with these two, and knew that his mother was among friends, his heart overflowed with love and gratitude toward this handsome stranger with humanity in his soul. Never had François known such kindness. He was to sleep in the room next to Hakkouki. In the night, unable to close his eyes, he rose quietly and went over to the window to watch the light in the room where they had placed his beloved mother. Toward midnight he saw one of the nuns come to the window and open it, and then the light went out. And then he knew that the light had also gone out of his mother's world-beaten soul.

"She is happy now," said François, softly, to himself, and with no thought for his own grief, he went back to his bed and fell asleep.

When the mayor called to see Hakkouki in the morning, the boy was still sleeping. Hakkouki, on hearing of the woman's death, impulsively decided to take the boy along with him.

"But," said the mayor, "why not leave him here? I will be a friend to him, and as he is a Bulgarian, he would be more a stranger in a foreign land." And so it was decided.

But when François awoke, he was inconsolable. It was a terrible blow to him that his friend had gone without his seeing him.

"Oh, why did he go?" he cried to the mayor.

"But he has left with me a sum sufficient to care for you and have you learn of books, if you will," said the mayor.

"But I could have gone with him as his

servant, and seen him always," sobbed François.

In the meantime, the train was carrying Hakkouki to Constantinople. "Fast it ought to be, and fast it must be that I am travelling, but oh, how long it takes!" said Hakkouki to himself. Crossing the Bosphorus again, he hurried impatiently toward Camduatim's house, where he was received with the greatest surprise.

"What," said Camduatim, "hast thou failed? How happens it that thou dost return?"

With his notions of time and travel, it seemed incredible that Hakkouki had been and seen all that he wished in so short a time. Camduatim had settled into his home to study and read of all that Hakkouki was to see and do. A life's work almost it seemed to Camduatim. Many days Hakkouki passed in converse with Camduatim, telling of all he saw in Bulgaria, of the roses and lands, of M. Ismahan, Anita, and

François. But not a word did he say of the cell in the cloister. He could almost hear in his imagination Camduatim say, "Ah! the fiends! the wretches! the dogs!" "Who?" Hakkouki would ask. "The Christians!" Camduatim would answer; and Hakkouki did not wish to hear him say it, for the loving Catholic people of Bulgaria, with their kindly ways and happy family life, were dear to him.

CHAPTER IV.

A DANGEROUS JOURNEY.

"MY son," said Camduatim, "it is hard to part with thee again so soon, when I have so lately found thee."

"Ah, indeed, I find it hard to part with thee," replied Hakkouki, "but I must go, for the sooner I leave, the sooner I shall return."

Camduatim shook his head in silence, for that return meant not to him, but to that country of the mountains which seemed to him so mythical. Then would Hakkouki be known to him no more. However, in his unselfish love for Hakkouki, he quickly threw off his personal sorrow, and entered with enthusiasm into the plans for his journey to Africa to learn of civet.

"I can be of great help to thee," said he at last. "Thou wilt need presentation to those in power, and having influence in this country, I can get permission for thee to travel as becomes thee in a foreign land."

"But," said Hakkouki, "I do not need it. I want to go among the people, and learn from them and be one of them. I do not want to travel as a person of distinction, in state. The people will then draw away from me, and I shall know nothing of their life."

Camduatim, however, cautiously kept his own counsel. He went forth early the next morning to procure what he thought necessary for Hakkouki's comfort, and what was still more important to Camduatim's peace of mind, Hakkouki's safety in travelling in this unknown country. Information was sent to Massowah, the town on the coast of Abyssinia where Hakkouki was to land. This was the principal port of the Italian colony which was then powerful in Africa. The colony was called by the picturesque name of "Colonia Eritrea," and was presided over by an Italian governor. To him by letter Camduatim appealed that, upon Hakkouki's arrival, he should be provided with a sufficient escort to insure his safety.

Camduatim's previous knowledge of Africa had been meagre, and all day he passed going from one person to another in Sentari, constantly more and more amazed as he learned of the conditions of life which existed in that savage country.

At night, as he sat with Hakkouki at their repast, he was surprised at what seemed taciturnity on the part of Hakkouki. His usual cheerful disposition was entirely changed. The explanation came in Hakkouki's remark:—

"I must start early to-morrow morning, and I wished much to be with thee to-day. Thou hast been away the entire day."

"But," said Camduatim, "thou couldst not go without thy papers. Thou couldst not leave the port. I have done much which will help thee."

In the enthusiasm of youth, his impatience to combat with the world, and that confidence in his power to combat victoriously which is so mighty before the great teacher, experience, visits a man, Hakkouki had little gratitude for the old man's care and caution. Later he came to appreciate it.

Arriving in Massowah, the Governor of the colony boarded the steamer to meet him, taking him to his own house. The town is located upon three coral islands, and is often compared to Venice, although more picturesque in its surroundings. The sea to the east, and the beautiful Abyssinian Mountains to the west, present an imposing view. The old Egyptian architecture here and there interspersed by recently built Italian edifices lends a peculiarly characteristic touch, while the various styles of dress of these people of all nations give color and charm to the scene.

Hakkouki found the climate delightful, warm, and healthful, and the town free from the terrible pests of insects and vermin which are so prevalent in hot countries. The Governor had provided an interpreter, one Ahmed by name. He was an Arab who had lived much in Persia, but, having had a native Abyssinian for a mother, he had passed a part of his youth inland, and spoke the dialects of the mountainous districts. Hakkouki looked with much interest upon this man, who was to be his constant companion.

"Is he to be also a friend?" Hakkouki asked himself. Ahmed presented an unresponsive appearance, and Hakkouki's question remained for many a day unanswered.

"I have made arrangements for your journey," said the Governor, as they sat about his hospitable board. "The men, mules, and camels are camped just without the town, from where we are to despatch them early to-morrow morning. They must start in advance of you."

"How is that?" asked Hakkouki.

"Why, you are to go by train," and the Governor laughed. "Ah! you thought we did not have trains in Africa? Well, you shall see."

The Governor was proud of the progress made by the Italians. They had built a road of twenty-seven kilometres, crossing that strip of country known as the Samhar, the horrors of which have been told by all travellers in these parts.

"You will have much to see," said Ahmed, who was in the gayest of spirits in anticipation of his journey "homeward," as he called it.

He flung back his new "shamma," exposing his sinewy brown arm. He had arrayed himself in this native garment, which is similar to the Roman toga, because it was the dress of his own people. Ahmed's shamma was made of pure white cotton, and had a strip of turkey red down the front. This is an emblem of Christianity among the Abyssinians, representing the blood of Christ. A pair of short white cotton drawers completed his costume.

"Why, what is that, Ahmed?" asked the Governor, pointing to a short leather jacket, tossed over the divan upon which Ahmed sat.

There was a look of hesitation upon his handsome face.

"It is my coat," said he. "It is so long since I have worn the shamma, I thought best to provide another garment, as it is always colder in the mountains."

He turned and repeated this answer to Hakkouki in Persian, and added, "You will wear the native dress also, Fitaurari?"

This title means "General" in Abyssinia, and Ahmed used it constantly in addressing Hakkouki. But it was some time before Hakkouki learned that Ahmed himself had the coat of a general. It was very handsome. Curious figures cut from green and yellow leather were sewed upon a red leather foundation. All about the edge was a fringe of tiny tongueless silver bells, and it had a silver filigree clasp.

" Perhaps it is just as well for you to wear the coat," said the Governor, slowly. Ahmed was well known to him, and he saw no reason to doubt his good intentions.

"I think, on the whole, Hakkouki, it might be well for you to wear the native dress also," said the Governor.

Hakkouki decided at once to leave behind his valuable and heavy suit, which he had worn away from Kaffiristan, and had again donned at Sentari. This would be safely cared for by the Governor, and, by exchanging a valuable diamond into the money of the country, he would have all that would be necessary or safe to carry. Presents for priests or persons of rank with whom he might meet, the Governor offered kindly to send him when he should desire. There was telegraphic communication to Asmara and other places.

The dinner completed, these three men, of such varying origin, seated themselves cross-legged upon the veranda overlooking the brilliantly illumined garden and fountain of the inner court. The hookah was produced, as all were smokers; and with this and tedge (a drink of the natives served in large horns) they whiled away the evening. Ahmed translated from one to the other in a brilliant, entertaining fashion. He also sang some of his native songs in a wild, musical voice. What with his wit and accomplishments, he was certainly a gay companion.

Early next morning the mules which Hakkouki and Ahmed were to ride were brought into the courtyard. They were to go first to the camp, there to start off the escort, and then, returning to the city, go to the shops, and purchase clothing for Hakkouki.

Before mounting, Hakkouki stopped to admire the trimmings of his white mule. The blanket was similar to Ahmed's coat; the collar of silver, to which many jingling ornaments were attached. Ahmed rode in true native fashion, one toe in the small stirrup.

"I have fitted you out as I thought necessary," said the Governor, "and I have asked Ahmed's counsel as to what is required in parts of the country I have never visited."

With fourteen camels to carry provisions, and six mules for the camping outfits, twenty men in charge of the animals and eight men with mules making up the military escort, it seemed to Hakkouki that he was well provided.

"I am travelling like a foreign monarch," said he.

"I believed an armed native escort necessary," said the Governor; "for not only may you meet with brigands, but there is internal strife going on between Ras Alula and Ras

Mangashah which we have not yet been able to quell. The troops of Ras Mangashah are our friends. From them you may ask protection, but those of Alula must be avoided."

The camp was hastily breaking up and getting ready for departure, the last of the straggling muleteers having arrived from town. Hakkouki and Ahmed having sent their mules with the escort, mounted new and very wild ones, and rode back to town. Then to the bazaar they went to purchase Hakkouki's costume. It was quick work to buy the trousers and shamma, but the coat was no ordinary effort, for the Governor was determined to have a certain one only.

"This will do just as well," said Hakkouki, pointing to one similar to Ahmed's.

The remark was repeated by Ahmed, but the Governor paid no heed. He continued to bargain and haggle and "waste time," as Hakkouki thought, and at last paid fourteen Maria Theresa dollars more for the one which he was determined to have. These dollars are worth about seven to the sovereign.

Ahmed explained that the coats represented rank, and that Hakkouki's must be superior to his.

Hakkouki donned his new clothes the next morning. Over the shamma he strapped on a cartridge belt, from which was hung also a short curving sword in a leather case. The Governor escorted them to the railway, and bade them good-by as they seated themselves in the small carriage.

The train was made up of a diminutive engine and two carriages of Italian make, also an open box-car which carried freight. There was no station, as during the time of year when the train runs to Sahati there is no need of cover, for it is then the dry season. They took their seats in the carriage in the early morning. About midday the train started. Over the Samhar they slowly wended their way, past Otumlo, a village in a sea of sand. This is a collection of round huts made of every imaginable scrap of rubbish, old oil tins, mats, and rags; past Moncullo, with its Swedish mission house standing out conspicuously amongst a similar collection of huts; past Dogali, celebrated in Italian annals for the victory over Ras Alula, when he came down from his mountain fastnesses to drive them into the sea; until toward night the train reached Sahati, at the foot of the Abyssinian Mountains.

From Sahati, as soon as the escort had caught up to them, they moved onward toward Asmara. They found here a good road, which had been much improved by the Italians, and which had an ascent of two thousand or three thousand feet through a country of wild vegetation. Beneath the trees the rich-colored gladioli and long hanging orchids gave beauty and color to the scene. At Ghinda they found a perfect paradise of luxuriant fertility.

"See," said Ahmed, looking upward, "there is Asmara."

Through the thick forest of quolquol trees, like seven-branched candlesticks, and seemingly almost over their heads, they could see the roof of the ancient church of Asmara. Seven thousand feet had they travelled upward from Massowah. From the heavy, misty air of the valley they suddenly emerged as if by magic into a sea of brilliant sunshine high above the clouds. They camped that night by one of the many springs which are in all the highlands of Abyssinia.

As soon as the camp was settled and the animals were unloaded, Ahmed departed on a tour of investigation. He returned shortly, showing great excitement.

"We cannot go on from here, Fitaurari, unless we join the rebels. They are fighting on all sides. Ras Mangashah's men are but a few miles to the north."

Now, Hakkouki had no idea of joining rebels or fighting. He came on a peaceful mission. He had planned to go north as far as Keren, where much civet was prepared for market, and where in the dense forests thereabouts is found the animal from which it is taken in its wild state. Ahmed's excitement gave him much uneasiness.

"Join the rebels!" said he. "Which side, then? Are not both sides rebels?"

Ahmed turned quickly with a flushed face.

"The southern Menelek has wrongly given Ras Mangashah the lordship of Tigré, and the friends of Ras Alula, who is an old man, will not have his kingdom taken from him."

"Would you fight against Alula then, by joining the rebels?" asked Hakkouki.

"By joining them," said Ahmed, cunningly, "we could learn of Mangashah's plans, and make them known to Ras Alula."

Then Hakkouki realized his danger. Ras (meaning prince) Mangashah and his men were friends of the Italians. He was ruler by order of King Menelek, with whom it was important that the Italians should be at peace. Hakkouki was travelling on the courtesy of the Italians, and here was Ahmed, a serpent among them, in sympathy with Ras Alula, the enemy. Hakkouki felt himself handicapped by only being able to obtain information through the interpreter. There was one thing, however, upon which he quickly determined. On no account must he allow his opposition to Ahmed's sympathies to escape him, for then Ahmed would not be frank with him. At the same time, while he was accepting the courtesy of the Italians, he felt that he ought not to allow spies among his escort.

Hakkouki, however, was fast becoming much attached to Ahmed. His gay spirits, his wild, yet loving nature, his amiability, wonderful physical endurance and beauty, were all attractions. But there was evidently that in his nature which it is hard to accustom one's self to in a friend — an entire lack of honor. Hakkouki asked himself "Can he ever be a friend to me?"

They were obliged to remain a short time in Asmara to find out more definitely the condition of the road to Keren. During this time, and afterward, Hakkouki accompanied Ahmed on all his tours, as he could not trust him.

On the road to town one morning — for they were camped two miles out — they passed some natives winnowing grain, called teff, from which they make their bread. They held baskets of the grain high above their heads, and as the peas fell to the earth, the wind blew away the chaff. Though they were in haste to reach town before the sun got high, Ahmed found time to jump down from his mule and kiss the prettiest girl. This was a habit of Ahmed's to which Hakkouki had already become accustomed, supposing it to be one of the customs of the country. Later, he found it was one of Ahmed's foreign introductions

— nevertheless, it seemed to please the natives.

As soon as they learned that Ras Mangashah had moved on, Hakkouki determined to push northward as fast as possible to Keren. They passed Azteclesan at the foot of the mountains, and cautiously entered the country of the powerful chief Hadghambassah. The latter was an ally of Ras Alula, noted for his cruelties and opposition to the Italian government. Hakkouki wished heartily to avoid Hadghambassah, — indeed, he hoped to keep free from any connection with the political condition of the country. Ahmed, on the contrary, was most anxious to see Hadghambassah. This much-feared man had built for himself a hut (known as a castle) on the highest point of the village, and fortified it with a wall of stones. He never left this stronghold except to go on marauding expeditions, for he had many enemies, and was in perpetual fear of assassination.

After travelling through a rough country they camped upon the bank of a beautiful stream in a narrow valley, with steep cliffs on either side, and a great variety of tropical vegetation. Here they were able to bathe in the stream, while the native troops lit roaring fires to frighten away the leopards and hyenas which swarm in these valleys.

After supper, as they smoked the hookah, and Ahmed drank his beloved tedge, they planned for the future.

"Fitaurari," said Ahmed, "if to learn of civet is your only mission, we may remain in this valley. The animal is common in this locality, and the natives of a village close by, called Amba Derho, live by hunting it and selling its perfume. They pack the substance in horn, like this." And Ahmed held up his drinking horn.

"In that case," said Hakkouki, "we will hunt the animals ourselves, and make this spot our headquarters."

Early next morning they rode to Amba

Derho. Although they passed several girls (probably pretty from Ahmed's point of view), he never once dismounted. Hakkouki smiled, for he knew Ahmed's whole heart must be in this enterprise to make him so neglectful of his duties.

"Ride slowly, Fitaurari," said Ahmed, as they came to a collection of huts, "and we will discover where they use the greatest quantity."

By their noses they were guided, for the natives use the scent so freely that the interior of the hut is saturated with it. It is used both as a medicine and a perfume. At last they halted. A man's head appeared in the aperture; then he crawled out and sat cross-legged by the side of the house, with a sulky look upon his face. Ahmed held out an amote. This is a bar of crystallized salt, used as money, five equalling an Abyssinian dollar.

It varies in value and size, and it is a token of affection when friends meet to give each other a lick of their respective amotes, which thereby diminishes the value. The man sprang eagerly forward to lick it, when Ahmed pressed him to take it. He bowed low, and then turning to Hakkouki he bowed lower, and called out "Dejitchmatch," which means "big man," for he was overwhelmed by the grandeur of Hakkouki's equipment.

"To-morrow we must go to hunt the civet," said Ahmed. The man shook his head.

"For two amotes I'll show you the animals now," he said.

"One," said Ahmed.

"Two," said the man.

"One," said Ahmed, and then the real bargain began.

To Hakkouki's amusement, Ahmed won. He usually did, for he laughed and was so good-natured about it that there seemed to be no way but to yield to him.

"This way," said the man.

They dismounted, and with a dozen or

more children they started through the village, each hut supplying another half dozen children. Hakkouki and Ahmed led their mules, for had they left them, they would quickly have been hidden underground or elsewhere. No one would ever have known where.

At last, in a great hole in the ground, with its top barred by long, pliable branches, they found the imprisoned animals. The native then held a small strong cage over an opening which he uncovered in the roof. One of the animals, in the hope of escape, sprang into it, and was immediately secured. As the civet secretes its perfume in larger quantities when irritated, the man poked him with a stick, and succeeded in obtaining a small quantity of this most powerful scent. This is usually accomplished by means of a thin wooden spoon which scrapes it out of the glands in which it is produced.

As they walked back toward the hut, Ahmed bargained for a hunt on the next night, and succeeded in getting the required number of men and traps.

"If we are to remain here for some time, Fitaurari," said Ahmed, "it would be a good thing for us to buy a cow. Our people love milk better than tedge, and it will keep our men in good humor if we add a cow to the party."

Hakkouki having agreed to the purchase, Ahmed at once began to bargain for one of the humpbacked animals of that country. It did not occur to either of them that they might experience some difficulty in getting the cow to camp.

"We must drive her ahead of us," proposed Hakkouki.

As long as they were accompanied by the whole village, they had no trouble, but when bereft of their escort, the cow objected to being driven. All efforts to force her to do other than she wished were of no avail.

"The obstinate brute!" said Ahmed. "I see nothing to do but ride her to camp."

And giving the rein of his mule to Hakkouki, he sprang nimbly upon the back of the cow. Hakkouki had implicit confidence in Ahmed's powers to accomplish whatever he might undertake. But when Ahmed had once mounted the cow, with the exception of an instantaneous view of a pair of cloven hoofs and an immense cloud of dust, he was lost to Hakkouki's vision for many a day to come. Straight ahead they seemed to go; but though Hakkouki anxiously hurried in pursuit, dragging Ahmed's unwilling mule, no trace whatever of the fugitives was discernible. Into the clouds they might have flown as far as any earthly sign was left of them.

"There is but one thing to do," thought Hakkouki; "go to the camp. He will probably reach there sooner than I."

At the camp, by motions, and what words he had learned, he communicated to the men the situation. After waiting a few hours, he sent out a searching party. When, on the next day, these men had not returned, Hakkouki decided to send the rest of the muleteers and camel-drivers in pursuit, thus leaving in camp only the eight natives who constituted the armed escort.

Again the same thing happened. The situation then seemed plain to them all. "Brigands," was the conclusion. "But what could brigands want with Ahmed and his cow?" This puzzled Hakkouki.

CHAPTER V.

THE ATTACK AND ESCAPE.

BEING well armed, he determined to take his eight soldiers and find Ahmed himself. He took the road back to the village. Not far from the scene of Ahmed's agility he stopped suddenly. Sounds of laughter could be distinctly heard back from the road. Breaking through the tangled brush, he and his followers rode toward the sounds. Soon, through an opening in the rocks, a remarkable scene met their eyes. A wide expanse of level country, through which flowed a narrow and winding river, stretched before them.

With the exception of a few large sycamores, this land was treeless. Mules, numbers of them, were tethered under the trees; and it was plain that a feast of some kind was going on. Men were dancing in the wildest manner, and among these men, no less wild than they, Hakkouki recognized his own muleteers. Tedge (the common drink of the people) in great horns was circulated freely.

"But where is Ahmed?" asked Hakkouki. He realized that the men who had been sent in search of him had succumbed to the attractions of the feast. It appeared to Hakkouki to be a religious feast. He saw what seemed to be a priest, who, with a mitre on his head and a purple umbrella above it, danced with the others. At certain intervals in the music he bathed a cross which he held in his hand in the stream.

Christianity was carried into Abyssinia about 600 A.D., and at the present day the forms are carried on in the same manner as at that time. The Abyssinian is not progressive, and scorns change. They take their religious zeal in dancing from the fact that David danced before the ark. Persistent attempts have been made to convert them to the Catholic form by the brave Jesuits who have suffered martyrdom at their hands, but have always failed. Generally, upon such occasions, many priests danced; in fact, they outnumbered the other people as dancers, but here there was but one.

As Hakkouki and his soldiers went forward, the natives surrounded them with open-mouthed wonder. Hakkouki looked into the faces about him, hoping to find Ahmed, but he was disappointed. Seeing that the feast was over, he ordered his men to return to their camp. Downright refusal, however, met his demand. The soldiers even refused him protection from his gaping captors, as they turned out to be. Under the circumstances there was nothing for Hakkouki to do but go where he was asked. He therefore mounted his mule, and rode along with them. In spite of his position, he could not help laughing a little at the ridiculous "armed escort."

Hakkouki's captors evidently considered him a person of distinction; for they rode beside and behind him, though never immediately in front of him. Moreover, they treated him with great courtesy, which was at least some compensation.

After a time he saw to his right the priest coming toward him. He was gorgeously attired, and carried the silver cross. Beside his mule walked two men, one holding the umbrella, the other a silver crutch. The face of the priest was covered by the white robe which he wore drawn up to his eyes; and the turkey red which was bound about his head to make the mitre fit, hid all above. He rode in silence beside Hakkouki, while the others fell back. A captive was safe in the hands of a priest; for such is the force of their religion, that the reverence for the priest governs more than arms. For some time they rode on in this way. Hakkouki began to feel anxious; certainly things had a dubious look.

When it became dark, however, a merry

voice beside Hakkouki whispered, "We are bound for Azteclesan to visit Hadghambassah." Joy leaped into Hakkouki's heart as he recognized Ahmed's voice. Before he had time to realize the horror of "visiting" Hadghambassah, taken prisoner as he was by his followers, Ahmed spoke again.

"I am his priest," laughed he. "The cow took me there. She never stopped until we reached Azteclesan. I hid myself within the church where no good priest will step, and there I thought to make myself a priest, and go to Hadghambassah and help him save his soul, for none but a priest would ever dare enter his presence unarmed. The day of Epiphany being near, he bade me hasten to the sacred stream to bathe the cross and purify him of his sins."

Hakkouki was full of admiration for Ahmed's cleverness.

"As I could not go to you, I held the men, knowing that you would follow," Ahmed continued.

Hakkouki was overjoyed. So happy a prisoner never walked into Hadghambassah's clutch. For with Ahmed found all things seemed possible. Nevertheless, he could not help feeling somewhat suspicious of Ahmed.

"Did you not guide that cow toward Azteclesan?" he asked of Ahmed.

"Oh, Fitaurari, how could you think so?"

But still Hakkouki had his doubts as to the cow taking a direct course to the man whom Ahmed wished so much to see.

"Why has he done this thing?" Hakkouki asked himself. "Hadghambassah is an ally of Ras Alula, and Ahmed is in sympathy with him. Why has he chosen to come here?"

He considered it wiser, however, not to ask more questions, so they continued the journey in silence. Arriving in the village, they went directly to the fortified hut on the highest eminence, where Hadghambassah lived. They were treated with great civility. The room into which they were ushered had ox horns let into the wall, upon which Hakkouki hung his gun and heavy cartridge belt, and Ahmed, his cross and heavy mitre.

The house was the finest Hakkouki had seen since leaving Massowah. Hadghambassah entered from a sleeping closet adjoining, although it was long past midnight. Hakkouki did not anticipate very polite treatment, as this was the man who had slapped Captain Bettini in the face when he had visited him the year before. Thus he had openly insulted and rebelled against the Italians. Thanks to the charming inventions of Ahmed, however, he was treated as if he were Ras Alula himself.

"Did you tell him I was Ras Alula?" he asked Ahmed.

"I told him you were sent by Ras Alula to tell him of his whereabouts, and that you would send him back presents on your return to the south country."

The repast was ordered, and the tedgehorn sent around the table. Notwithstanding the fact that this drink was nauseating to Hakkouki, courtesy forbade him to refuse it. Food was then set before them, and they fell to. So hungry was Hakkouki, that even the sour, strangely flavored bread tasted delicious. Gayety followed; for laughter and fun, stories and songs, went hand in hand with Ahmed. None could resist him. At length Ahmed said to Hadghambassah: —

"Hakkouki is camped below at Amba Derho. He has left his camels there, and brought his men with him."

"To-morrow they can return and fetch the camels here," was the reply.

But Ahmed, knowing the trickery of his own kind, answered: —

"To-morrow we must hunt."

"I fear it is not safe," said Hadghambassah. "The country is overrun with friends of Ras Mangashah. We should encounter them in battle."

"Hakkouki has armed men," replied

Ahmed. "Moreover, he has letters to Ras Mangashah, and even to the Italians to make friends of them."

Hadghambassah frowned. A veritable thunder-cloud overspread his dark face, for he immediately suspected trickery himself.

"How comes it so?" asked he.

"We stole them," answered Ahmed, simply. "We came upon a stranger travelling, and relieved him of what we thought might be of use to us."

Thus Ahmed smoothed all troubles away with his easy tongue.

The next day they hunted.

Azteclesan was situated on the highest point in that part of Abyssinia, overlooking the country for miles in all directions. The thick forests of the surrounding hillside gave fine opportunities for game, and as the town was large, they had plenty of company on their hunt. Hakkouki was anxious to get a civet. Having sent the men back to the camp to care for the animals, Hakkouki felt in no hurry to depart; moreover, he began to feel that Hadghambassah might not let him go so easily.

The chief, however, soon tired of such continuous hunting, and remained behind. Priests, although they are allowed all liberty, do not generally hunt. Their lives, with the exception of dancing, which they carry to the extreme, are generally inactive. But Ahmed, being interpreter as well as priest, was obliged to hunt if Hakkouki required it. As Hakkouki was especially anxious to secure a civet, and as this animal goes about only at night, the hunters remained out until midnight. There were with them men from the village, who were accustomed to catching the animal; and as one live civet is worth forty dead ones, they carried traps made of quolquol branches.

The civet is such a timid, stealthy animal that hours of quiet watching are often required before a capture is made. The traps are worked by a native in ambush. These cat-like creatures are from two to three feet in length. They are sharp-nosed, have a striped skin, and long tails marked with dark rings. Their eyes are like a cat's, closing to a mere line to shut out the light.

After a long, silent wait, Hakkouki was delighted to hear the cover of a trap fall. The natives hurried toward it, and secured the affrighted animal by straps of rawhide. Ahmed then and there bargained for him. It seemed strange to Hakkouki that in these woods at midnight, when all were ready for food and sleep, that Ahmed should undertake the purchase. Indeed, in his anxiety to procure the animal, Ahmed took from his belt the money which had been left after the purchase of the cow, and offered it to the men to be allowed to carry the animal on his own saddle. This was a sum double the supposed value of the civet. They mounted their mules, which had been tethered on the edge of the wood, Ahmed calling Hakkouki's men to help him bind the animal on his saddle. Meanwhile, their friends, satisfied with the money they had received, rode rapidly on. Then in single file, they started on their wearisome journey to the top of the mountain.

"Fitaurari!" whispered Ahmed, suddenly.

Hakkouki, turning his head, heard Ahmed say, "Soon we strike the main road. In a few hours we can be at the camp. Let us run for our lives."

And run they did, as fast as their mules could carry them.

Since it was daylight when they reached the camp, they found the men enjoying their freedom by playing the exciting national game of gambolta, where tiny balls are moved about on a wooden board. It was no easy matter to hurry the men to break camp and pack up. Ahmed's indefatigable persistence accomplished it at last, and they took the road.

"Once past the hill-road, and we shall be free," said Ahmed. "But should Hadghambassah discover our escape before the men sleep, our chance will be small."

Ahmed reckoned that the men of Azteclesan, being content with their money, would sleep first.

"Being in advance of us, they may not have noticed our escape," said he.

As rapidly as possible they continued on their way. Although near midday, they travelled on, watching from side to side, to detect their hidden foe. In that region the jungle is so wild, that the narrow pathway called a road allows only a single file to pass. Their men were frightened to the point of weakness. Not only were stories rife among them of the horrible assaults and cruelties perpetrated by Hadghambassah and his followers upon inoffensive people, but they knew well that the chief had already begun to suspect his "visitors." The native soldiers, having been companions of the people during the stay at Azteclesan, had brought back tales which made their teeth chatter and their hair stand on end.

Previously it had been difficult to drive the men on, but now they themselves drove the poor animals without mercy. For once neither rest nor food was needed by these frightened men.

"To Asmara, as fast as the camels can travel," was the one thought of all.

"We must move by day to accomplish greater distance, although it is more dangerous," said Ahmed.

The night before reaching Asmara, Hakkouki lay in peaceful sleep in his tent. Danger, he felt, was passed, his mission thus far accomplished, and in his dreams he lived again in Drusa's court. Sweet visions greeted his eyes, sweet sounds his ears, and sweet scents had he brought back to that beloved room where stood the Princess thanking him — when, suddenly, he felt himself rudely shaken, and heard Ahmed's voice in his ear.

"Fitaurari, quick!" said the interpreter.

Pulling him along, Ahmed hurried Hakkouki to the rear of the tent, and thence quickly down a pathway in the brush.

Hakkouki, now thoroughly awake, saw his mule hidden behind a tree.

"Mount!" said Ahmed, breathlessly, "and wait here for me. Should I not come by daylight ride on to Asmara. I shall have gone before." Then Ahmed disappeared.

Not knowing why, fearing to disturb Ahmed's plans, and impatient at being inactive, Hakkouki silently waited. He could hear the sound of clashing spears, but as he heard no rifle shots, he felt his own men could not be engaged.

"This is terrible," said he to himself. "If I could but help, but I must be ready to start at the instant, should Ahmed appear. Why could he not have told me?"

Day was breaking. At that moment he heard a sound in the bush near him, and immediately afterward saw Ahmed's mule, seemingly alone. Then he saw that Ahmed was bound flat upon the mule's back.

"Dead!" said Hakkouki, with a gasp. But no! He could see that Ahmed had his foot caught in the rein and was guiding the mule toward him. He was wounded and appeared to be dying. There he lay, with his feet extending forward, and his body bent backward, and bound down tightly by a strip of rawhide about the neck. With his hand he pointed to Asmara. Hakkouki quickly cut the straps which bound him.

"Quick!" gasped Ahmed. "There is no time to lose."

And wounded though he was, he hurried his mule along. Though faint from loss of blood, his wonderful will sustained him.

"No, I must not die until we reach Asmara; not until you're safe, Fitaurari," he whispered hoarsely. And a faint semblance of his merry smile appeared on his face.

"Asmara at last!" cried Ahmed, when

they came in sight of the huts. Then, just as they reached the Italian quarters, where Hakkouki would be protected, the brave fellow fell forward upon his mule's neck unconscious.

But Ahmed was strong, and his wonderful vitality asserted itself. After the surgeon's care, and a night's rest, he looked almost himself again.

"It was this way," he told Hakkouki. "They came upon us like thieves in the night, and took away our camels. Our men were sleeping, for they thought we were out of danger."

"Was it Hadghambassah?" asked Hakkouki, feeling ashamed that he, the chief, had been in hiding behind a tree.

"No, no," replied Ahmed; "we thought it was at first, but it turned out to be Ras Mangashah's men." With a smile he added, "Our soldiers did not wait to see. They ran and hid."

"Like me," said Hakkouki, sadly.

"The muleteers and camel-drivers fought for a time with what they had to fight with, but the soldiers had carried their guns away with them."

"But Ras Mangashah's men were to be our friends. Why did you not tell them the Italians had promised us their protection?" said Hakkouki.

"Ah! but they had heard we were at Azteclesan as friends of Ras Alula," replied Ahmed, "and they wanted to kill you. They fired the camp just as I caught my mule and jumped upon her back, and then the brutes bound me down. They wanted fun, they said."

"He is indeed my friend," said Hakkouki, as he looked at the interpreter. In a few days Ahmed recovered sufficiently to be carried upon a litter to Sahati, and thence by train to Massowah.

To Hakkouki's surprise, they were met upon arrival by the Italian Governor. Hakkouki had especially requested his friends in Asmara not to notify the Governor, as he was in doubt as to the day upon which it would be safe to move Ahmed; and he did not wish to give the Governor any unnecessary trouble. Still more surprised was he when the Governor said: —

"I came to the train both yesterday and day before. The soldiers said you might be here any day. What caused your delay?"

Then Hakkouki realized that the soldiers had arrived ahead of them.

"It was Ahmed's wound," answered Hakkouki.

"They told me nothing of it," said the Governor.

"They did not know," laughed Ahmed. "They could not see with their backs."

A week or so later Hakkouki left Massowah for the south of France to study the methods of obtaining perfumes from the many varieties of flowers growing there.

While walking in the streets of Genoa, where the steamer from Massowah landed, his attention was called to a notice posted upon a wall.

"Remarkable capture by the Italians in Abyssinia of the bold chief Hadghambassah, who has been the fear of the tribes in the vicinity of Azteclesan for years. He was taken by force from his fortress on the top of the mountain. This is considered a great conquest over Ras Alula. Hadghambassah is now imprisoned in the Italian coast station of Assab."

Then Hakkouki read in the list of men whom the Italian government had recently honored for bravery that of an Arab, one Ahmed Jemadar Mahmoud Khan, by name. "And this is the way Ahmed has returned the courtesy showed us on our hunting trip, for all he was such a good friend of Ras Alula," laughed Hakkouki.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FESTIVAL OF MI-CARÊME.

THE same evening that Hakkouki read the notice he took train for Cannes. On one thing he had determined, that in France he should not travel as a person of distinction. Upon his arrival in Cannes, therefore, he purchased a blue cotton blouse and trousers, and a small rough cap, such as those who work in the gardens wear.

Leaving his valuables in charge of his banker, he stepped jauntily into the railway carriage which was to carry him over the short branch road of eighteen kilometres to Grasse. For the first time in his life Hakkouki felt himself one of the people. It was wonderful what effect his change of costume made in his feelings; also wonderful were the changed manners of others toward him, particularly as he had thoughtlessly taken a first-class carriage.

There were few passengers for this early train, made up of only four carriages. Presently, however, the pretty face of a little lady appeared at the door of the carriage, and Hakkouki, with natural gallantry, rose to make room for her, struggling to remove his close-fitting cap. A disdainful expression obliterated the smile upon the pretty face, and lispingly the owner asked of the guard, "Is there not a third-class carriage on the train?"

"Show me your ticket, man," growled the guard.

The ticket entitled Hakkouki to a first-class passage, which the pretty one noticed, and saying, "I will ride in a third-class carriage," she disappeared, leaving the sweet odor of violets to remind Hakkouki of her presence.

The suddenness of the attack, for a moment, disconcerted Hakkouki. The blood flew to his face, and anger rose within him. But in a moment a smile overspread his handsome face.

"What if Drusa could have seen that?" he thought. Then, as the train pulled out of the station, he said aloud, "Of course the dear little woman wouldn't want to sit in the carriage with these clothes. I could have assured her they were quite clean, though."

Soon he was in sight of the town of Grasse. Upon the sidehill he could see the white walls and buildings among the olive trees. Higher up was the tall white tower of the Cathedral rising above the red-tiled roofs, and higher still, the smoke of numerous factories curling up to the clouds.

In this district of Provence are more than ninety distilleries of perfumes, fifty of which are located in the town of Grasse itself. These vary in size from the great buildings where the work is done by steam, to the small ones in the homes of the owners. The surrounding country is overspread with gardens and high walls; each strip of ground being planted with vines, orange trees, and flower buds.

"If the soil of Provence were to be valued at the price of the best land in France," wrote Mirabeau, "its entire rental would not defray the cost of the walls that are used for holding it up."

No fruit tree which will grow, nor sweet-scented flower which can be made to yield its essence, is neglected here.

Hakkouki, from the car window, could see fields of flowers ablaze with color. Roses, violets, jonquils, jasmine, and tuberoses, in vivid masses, were everywhere.

When he reached the station in Grasse, Hakkouki found that he had by no means got to the town, which, with its irregular roofs heaped at random, tier above tier, seems to be trying to climb the mountain. As he stepped out upon the platform, he saw his dainty little fellow-traveller step from her third-class carriage at the same moment. By this time she had acquired a genuine dislike for Hakkouki; for the hard board seats of a third-class carriage had not improved her temper.

Hakkouki smiled sweetly as he passed her, whereupon her face took on a somewhat amazed expression. As there were two omnibuses, he saw no reason why he should enter the same one she did. She lifted her silken and much-ruffled petticoats, thereby displaying a very dainty little foot, and with a light and somewhat spiteful spring, she settled herself into the corner of the other omnibus facing Hakkouki, through the open window.

Hakkouki stared straight at her; certainly a workman could not give offence to such a fine lady. "I have never seen any one like her," said he to himself.

The two omnibuses were rivals. They started off at a furious gallop up the hill, and raced each other through the narrow streets and zigzag turns, with imminent risk of a collision or an upset. The little lady in the other omnibus, which passed Hakkouki's just before reaching the hotel, was much disturbed. Anger and fright were depicted upon her fair countenance. Hakkouki thought it would have been easier if he had taken "la voitre de St. François" (as they called the use of the legs in that country) and carried that spiteful little bunch of ruffles and lace and feathers upon his shoulder.

Hakkouki had inquired of Pierre, the coachman who drove him to the station in Cannes, for a residence in Grasse, and Pierre had sent him to his own mother. Alighting from the omnibus, Hakkouki was directed up a flight of steps, where he found the old woman on the pavement roasting coffee. Most of the housework in this town is done on the sidewalks.

"Bon jour, Madame, la mère de Pierre," called Hakkouki, merrily, for he knew her at once. Pierre had said, "She will be sitting there at her work," and a homesick tear had trickled down his rough face.

With a bright smile of welcome Hakkouki was received by "old Madame" and "young Madame" and all six of "young Madame's" children. Then they placed a table before him on the pavement, and brought bread, red wine, and cigarettes. Hakkouki looked away and away over the undulating country in an ever-widening circle, on hill upon hill of soft gray olives and softer green pines, in the distance. The sunlight touching here and there the brilliant green of the terraced cornfields, the pink and white and blue and yellow of the flower-gardens below; and like enclosing arms in the far distance, lay the shadowy Esterels to the west, the glittering snow-capped Alps to the east, and between them a long straight strip of exquisite blue — the sea.

Hakkouki was up betimes the next morning, for all the flowers must be gathered while the dew is on them.

"Monsieur," called old Madame after him, "take Pierre's hat." And she held out a huge straw disc, as large as an umbrella. "Go straight to M. Girot," advised Madame. "I used to work for him myself. He will give you work, and is an easy master. The young masters are greedy, and want to make more money than they have a right to. But M. Girot has made enough and lets his people make some too."

Old Madame had already told Hakkouki of her own patch of land out of the town, where she cultivated the sweet yellow jasmine. While a girl she had saved her money until she had enough to buy a small piece of land. Here she built a tiny hut just large enough to sleep in, and in her spare time she had worked upon the jasmine lot, until she was able to buy a small patch adjoining it. By working longer hours and saving every sou, she had become the proprietor of a house and large garden. Being thus possessed of a good dowry, she had married the keeper of the hotel, who, at his death, left her a rich woman.

"Pierre could come and fill his father's place, but he wants life, and Grasse is too slow for him. So he must live in Cannes," said old Madame.

It was a long walk to the old Franciscan Convent, where M. Girot had his distillery and office. Hakkouki was, therefore, too late to go to the fields and see the flowers gathered that morning. As he arrived the people with cart-loads of flowers were just coming from the fields to the church, where the "Triage" takes place. There are three processes, known as "Cucillage," the gathering; "Triage," the stripping of the petals from the calyx and stem; and "Enfleurage," the distilling of the petals to procure the essential oil.

M. Girot received Hakkouki kindly, but indifferently. Without turning his head from his writing, he said, —

"Bon jour; what can I do for you?"

"I would like work," said Hakkouki.

"Where have you been at work? whose gardens have you been in, or did you work in the factory?"

"I have not worked here," stammered Hakkouki. "I am a stranger."

"Ah!" said M. Girot; "I have all the hands I need."

"I come from Madame of the 'Fort Lion,'" said Hakkouki, not willing to take his dismissal so quickly.

At this M. Girot turned and looked at him.

"She sent you, did she? You are a stranger, you say? Are you a friend of that scapegrace son of hers?"

Now Hakkouki didn't feel sure whether he was a friend of Pierre or not. At the same time Pierre's recommendation was the only one he had.

"I am from Persia," he made answer, simply.

This interested M. Girot. "Ah!" said he. "You know of the industry there?"

"Yes," answered Hakkouki, "and I have lately been in Bulgaria."

M. Girot was all attention. "That's good," he said. "The Bulgarian rose is the only rose I cultivate. There is double the amount of oil in it. I'll have nothing to do with any other. Some say the yellow rose grows more luxuriantly, and that it has a sweeter fragrance, but the Bulgarian rose is the rose for me. I have good crops and I make money." The employer folded his hands complacently and smiled.

"Bien!" he said suddenly, "I'll give you work," as if he were doing Hakkouki a great favor. "Step through that door into the church, and go to work," he said bluntly. "I'll call you when I want to hear about Bulgaria. I haven't time now. I'll take you through my distillery later, and you can tell me all you know. Now to work!" And the great man swung around quickly in his seat, and continued his writing.

Hakkouki, as he stepped through the door into the church, felt puzzled. What troubled him, he could scarcely say. But he knew he was angry. Why? M. Girot had been kind; he had even given him work. In the condition in which he had placed himself, he ought to have felt grateful, and yet — what was that tone of superiority in M. Girot's manner? Was he superior to all the people whom Hakkouki saw toiling at the tables before him? Because he paid them what they earned? Was he wiser, better, more clever, more capable, or whatever superiority consists in, than they were? He wondered if others in the great crowd had felt as he now felt when they were engaged to work for M. Girot.

He solved it all at last. The anger and the indignation which had risen when M. Girot implied his ownership not only of his hands to work, but of his mind to tell "all that he knew," gradually quieted down at last. "It is because I am not used to it," he thought. "All have spoken respectfully and with courtesy to me before." And then he asked himself, "Why am I different now? Because I put on another suit of clothes and ask to be paid for my work?"

But Hakkouki did not answer this question. He took off his ungainly hat and looked about him with interest. He saw the long tables filling the great body of the church, which was open from the flower-strewn floor to the raftered roof. Some of the long tables were heaped two or three feet high with violet petals drying for distillation. At other tables men and women were separating the blue petals from the calyx and stalk, much care being used to free them from the green. There were more women than men, and all were talking and laughing, their bright, sunny faces showing neither sorrow nor care.

Hakkouki took his seat between a girl and a boy on the only bench where there seemed to be a place to sit. The girl kindly moved up to give him more room, but the boy made no effort to accommodate him.

"Will you have this basket?" asked the

girl, pleasantly. She worked so rapidly that Hakkouki felt ashamed of his own slowness.

When her basket was full, the girl, whom they called Marie, took it to the counter, where her petals were weighed, and she received her pay at once. She returned jingling her sous in her pocket. As she passed behind the boy, she pushed his head forward into his basket, and called him "Paresseux," which means "lazybones." She did the same to Hakkouki. Laughingly, she again took her seat beside him. Hakkouki felt grateful for what he supposed to be her courtesy, for he was feeling rather lonely.

"You work very fast," he said.

Marie laughed.

"You make much money."

She laughed again.

"I cannot work fast, and cannot make much money. Am I not unfortunate?" Hakkouki looked at her with such a sad expression that Marie laughed immoderately.

Then Hakkouki laughed too, and they became friends.

Marie went often to empty her basket and get her money. The wages were four sous a kilo, or four cents for two pounds. By dinner time she had earned fifty sous, while Hakkouki had earned only six. As he had brought nothing to eat with him, Marie took her bread and cheese from her pocket and promptly offered him half.

"How much shall I pay you?" asked Hakkouki.

"Four sous," answered she, quite as if she were accustomed to sell half her lunch every day.

"Would you like some wine?" she asked. "You can buy two sous' worth just outside the door." And as Hakkouki had no tin cup, Marie offered to run and get it for him.

Hakkouki's labor that morning had purchased his luncheon.

"It's something to be able to earn one's bread," thought he, and he determined to work faster during the afternoon.

The effect of M. Girot's words, however, did not pass away from Hakkouki's mind. He began to be curious as to the feelings of his colaborers.

"How long have you been here?" he asked one day of Marie, as they worked together upon acacia blossoms.

"Five years," answered Marie.

"What a long time," said Hakkouki. "And you're very happy here? You like M. Girot?"

"Oh, yes," said Marie. "He is very good, and Mme. Girot is so kind and sweet. She is an American, you know, and comes from the country where everybody is rich and yet everybody works, and so the working people are as good as anybody. We all go to their beautiful home at mi-carême [the lenten festival] and they make us very happy."

"And Jean here, your brother," said Hakkouki, motioning toward the boy on his other side, "does he go? He does not seem as happy as you."

"Jean, oh, no," said she, laughing. "Jean will not go. He says he has no house to ask M. and Mme. Girot to come to, and he will not take charity. But Jean is just ill-natured. We can't all have fine houses and be rich and beautiful like Mme. Girot." And Marie smiled contentedly.

Hakkouki felt that he had solved another problem. "It was just because I was ill-natured that I was offended when M. Girot said to me, 'You can come with the others to my house at mi-carême,'" he said to himself. If he were happy and good like Marie, he would be delighted to go. As for Marie, she talked of nothing but the beautiful house and gardens, the flowers to be strewn on the floor for Mme. Girot to walk upon, the beautiful new clothes the girls would wear, the illumination at night, and last but not least, "the lovely things which they would have to eat."

So Hakkouki decided to go. Who could resist after hearing Marie talk of it?

"Where do you come from?" asked Marie, one day.

"From Persia," answered Hakkouki.

"And where is that? In Africa?" asked Marie, simply.

"It's farther than Africa," said Hakkouki.

"And how did you know of M. Girot so far away?" she asked.

"I didn't know of him until I came here," said Hakkouki.

Marie turned her great eyes in surprise upon him.

"And did you come so far without knowing where you could get work?"

"Yes," laughed Hakkouki.

"Who told you to come to him?"

"Madame of the 'Fort Lion.'"

"Ah, you know Madame?" said Marie, looking pleased.

"I am living with her," replied Hakkouki. "Her son Pierre sent me to stay with her."

Then Marie bent her head forward blushingly, and asked softly, "Do you know Pierre?"

"Yes," said Hakkouki. "Why does he not live here?"

"Ah," said Marie, sadly, "it is not his fault. It is old Madame's. She is so stingy. She says he must work just as she did, and yet she is rich. Pierre has no need to work. He should live in a fine house and drive fine horses. Ah! Pierre can drive so beautifully." Then the girl became quiet, and worked very hard.

A few days later, Hakkouki was ordered to work in the distillery. Here the flower petals were placed upon a glass slab coated with prepared fat. After the petals were laid on half an inch deep, a glass lid prepared in the same manner was closed over the flowers. The fat absorbs the perfume in from twelve to twenty-four hours. When it is saturated, it is packed in tins for shipment. In this way the fleeting odors of the flowers are caught and held until washed out with alcohol.

Hakkouki was set to work spreading the flowers upon the glass slabs, for they must be often replenished. Some delicate perfumes require fifty to eighty new layers of petals upon the same fat. Those flowers which are very strong in perfume do not need to be replenished as many times. It takes sixteen thousand kilos of rose petals to make one kilo of French otto of rose.

In some factories all flowers but the violet after "triage" are simply shot down through a trap-door at the end of the building, and here thrust into caldrons of boiling-hot fat. This process extracts the perfume more quickly, but is more wasteful, as much fragrance passes off into the air. It seemed almost sacrilege to Hakkouki that these beautiful flowers should be so barbarously treated, but he was answered, "Roses are said to be born to live but a morning, and here we immortalize them."

While at this work, Hakkouki was still able to take his luncheon with Marie and her sulky brother Jean; but when the orange blossom season began, and he went among the trees to gather the blossoms, he lost sight of his friends for a time.

Among the close-growing, round-topped trees he worked, from early morning until late at night. The scent was so overpowering that occasionally one of his fellow-workers would drop silently to the ground in a faint. But Hakkouki found himself able to work with the best of them. After a time he began to understand why the festival of mi-carême was so joyously anticipated by the flower workers. He actually found himself counting the time which must elapse before that day of rest and enjoyment.

"Work surely brings pleasure, after all," said Hakkouki. "How else could I ever have longed so earnestly for this one gala-day?"

"Provence is the garden of France, and Grasse the garden of Provence."

All its ways seem to presuppose pleasantness and its paths peace, yet from the earliest times until the last century there has been fighting and much cruel suffering here. Beginning with the time of the invasions of remote and barbarous tribes of Moors, who made their way here and carried the inhabitants off as slaves, it has been sacked by the Spaniards, involved in disputes with rival popes, destroyed by Francis I. on the approach of Charles V., and plundered by Charles V. when he did reach it; it suffered in the war of succession in Poland, and even worse for Maria Theresa's war with Frederick the Great. Almost every European war has made itself felt in Provence. It was either occupied by the enemy, or its fortifications destroyed lest it should be occupied. Sometimes the enemy demanded ten thousand bottles of scent in ransom, but this was only in addition to as much money as would have been demanded without the scent.

On this industry has Grasse lived and thriven, and its inhabitants become enriched. Mme. de Pompadour is said to have spent five million francs in one year on perfumes, mostly produced in this little town by its hard-working people.

On the day of mi-carême, however, nobody worked. Even Pierre came from Cannes; for who else could drive the prize-car in the procession of the "bœuf-gras" so well as he? said old Madame. If Pierre were not admired as a worker, he certainly was as a fancy driver. And a wild day it was, to be sure.

Hakkouki, in his small room on the balcony just over the pavement was awakened at an early hour by the stir. The furniture and mattresses must be dusted and beaten in the street, and "young Madame's" children must be dressed, scolded, and punished, all before breakfast in the open air.

He dressed himself in holiday attire, and after the noisy breakfast, joined the procession on Pierre's coach.

Through the narrow, winding alleys, under the arched buttresses thrown from house to house, Pierre drove, to the admiration of all.

The streets were gay with flags and festoons, and bright with the high-colored shoulder-scarfs and skirts of the women. The smiling faces, white teeth, and brilliant eyes of the people were good to look upon, and would long be remembered by Hakkouki.

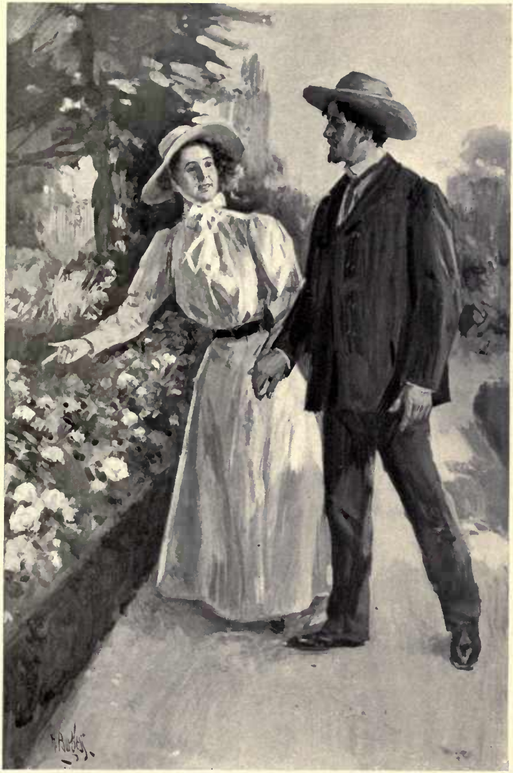
In the crowd Hakkouki recognized Marie and her brother. Even Jean could not retain his sulky expression that day. Confetti was flying in showers, and peals of merry laughter made sweeter music than the flutes and other instruments. Then there was the carnival, and the masqued figures in costume forcing their way through the crowd, the fakirs, the fair, and all the wild tumult. But always there was courtesy and merriment among these fun-loving people, who neither drink to excess nor fight. In the evening came the fête at M. Girot's house, for all his employees.

"Come with us," said Marie to Hakkouki, but her glance toward Pierre was far more inviting.

"It will all be just as I have told you," said Marie, hastening along in the direction of M. Girot's house. "See the beautiful gateway, and oh! the heavenly gardens. Did I not tell you?" asked she. "But then you could not know how beautiful it was until you saw it. See the beds of roses, and there are the violets. Madame loves violets best of all. And those little white flowers are the anemones."

It seemed strange that this girl who lived her life among the flowers should love them so ardently.

"And there!" called she, excitedly, dragging Hakkouki along by the hand, "there's the house. Did you ever see so beautiful a house? It is of stone; and see the vines and



"'SEE THE BEDS OF ROSES, AND THERE ARE THE VIOLETS.'"

the ivy growing over it. Monsieur built it when he married Madame," she whispered in Hakkouki's ear. "But come, we must go to the other side where Madame stands on the balcony, and you will see how beautiful she is."

Breathlessly this enthusiastic girl pulled Hakkouki along through the garden. Everywhere in the paths and under the trees tables were spread, and great crowds of gayly dressed people in the highest spirits walked about.

"There she is," whispered Marie, "and there is M. Girot beside her, and François, the new foreman. Oh, isn't she beautiful? Did you ever see such a beautiful lady?"

They were immediately in front of the low balcony, where stood Mme. Girot in all her sweet infantile beauty. To Hakkouki's astonishment, he found that she was no other than his little fellow-traveller from Cannes to Grasse. Lifting his hat, he looked at her, and smiled in answer to her greeting.

She recognized him at once, and her face flushed.

At that moment the young foreman, who stood near her, gave a cry of astonishment.

"It is he! It is surely he!" he said, loudly.

"Who?" asked Mme. Girot, turning toward the excited boy.

"Hakkouki! My Hakkouki from Bulgaria! And before that from Persia, where he is a great lord!" And François — for so he proved to be — sprang from the balcony toward the man he looked upon as little less than a god.

"For the land's sake!" ejaculated Madame in good Yankee English.

Her interest and curiosity were roused immediately, and she smiled again upon him. Hakkouki, however, did not see it, for he was led off by François, Pierre, Marie, and his other new-found friends.

Afterward, Hakkouki remembered that although Mme. Girot received the people at her home, she did it, not as one of them, but with an air of condescension and patronage, as if, indeed, she were a being far superior. Yet, to Hakkouki, that day of pure, simple enjoyment was a very happy one; and he told his friends so.

As they seated themselves about one of the tables, and Hakkouki noted the joy of these simple peasant folk, he was glad that he had entered Grasse as a workman. Not only did he feel that their friendship was truer than that of the higher classes, but he had proved to his satisfaction that money was not a necessity in the pursuit of happiness. Then, from the brilliantly lighted garden, with its flowers and merry laughter, his mind flew back to his adopted land and Drusa.

CHAPTER VII.

NEW FRIENDS.

THE festival of the mi-carême being over, and Hakkouki having by that time gained a fairly good general knowledge of the perfume-giving flowers of Southern France, he made plans to leave Grasse and continue his search for information in the New World. Mexico and the vanilla bean were to be his next study. As François pleaded hard to accompany his idol on this journey, Hakkouki consented to take him.

When Hakkouki made his determination known to Marie, she asked, "And have you nothing more to learn in France?"

"Indeed, yes," answered Hakkouki. "There is doubtless more to learn in France than any short lifetime could accomplish, but as it is only flowers that I am studying, I must push on."

"And are there no more flowers to study?" persisted Marie, for she was loath to have her new friend go.

"Here in this garden," said Hakkouki, "I have watched the orange blossom, the rose, the violet, the jasmine, the heliotrope, the wallflower — "

"Ah!" said Marie, "but there is one that you have not seen, — the lavender."

"I am told that lavender grows in England," said Hakkouki.

"Does it?" asked Marie. "I know there are many cultivators of it near the mountain of Ventoux in Vaucluse."

"Then to Vaucluse I shall go," said Hakkouki.

Hakkouki found François an interesting companion as well as a faithful friend. The boy had profited much by his schooling.

"Ah, Monsieur," said he, "I always meant to find you. I studied that I might learn how, and when the mayor of Kalofer died, and they told me I must work, I went to work that I might find you."

"Did they tell you that the money I left for you was gone in such a short time?" asked Hakkouki.

"Yes; they said I had been a burden to the mayor for a long time."

"Truly," said Hakkouki, "honest men are hard to find."

"I was only a beggar boy, you know," said François, "and as my mother was French, they said it was right that I should go to her country to earn my living. So they sent me to Grasse. M. Girot is a relative of my mother, and he took me as his foreman; but he never could have done so if I had not studied books, and that I have to thank you for, Monsieur."

In the Department of Vaucluse the lavender is cultivated in the greatest abundance. It flourishes best in a dry, sandy soil.

"We will stay in the village of Vaucluse," said Hakkouki. Here, in this tiny village of five hundred and ninety souls, was not only the factory for distilling lavender, which constitutes a very important branch of commerce, but also a silk factory, and one for the preparation of madder and of paper. Its industrious population worked early and late.

Hakkouki and François visited the enclosures of dry land where the lavender was cultivated, and found a low shrub from one to three feet high, with irregular dull green leaves and spikes of small, bluish gray flowers growing on long stalks. In this locality they cut the stalks with sickles, and distilled the stalk with the blossoms.

"But," said the foreman of the works, "in England, where they distil only the blossoms, they produce an oil of much finer quality. We manufacture three thousand to four thousand kilogrammes a year, worth twenty thousand to thirty thousand francs, but the English lavender, being more delicate in perfume, is worth four times as much."

As soon as they had gathered what information they could get about French oil of lavender, Hakkouki took François to visit the wonderful "Fontaine de Vaucluse," which is a natural cascade in the mountains.

"This is a place," said François, "where one might come and live forever."

"So said the poet Petrarch," answered Hakkouki. "There," he continued, pointing beyond the magnificent château which bears his name, "is the spot where he was born."

The grandeur of the scene, the powerful voice of nature in the rushing waters, impressed Hakkouki in a way not soon to be forgotten; and, like François, he too might have wished never to leave the place, but for his ambition. There, in close touch and sympathy with nature, at which time a man comes nearest to all that is divine within him, he thought continually of Drusa.

On the way down the mountain side to the quiet, sunlit valley below, he said to François, "We will go to England, and at a place called Liverpool we will step aboard a steamer and sail across the seas to Mexico."

François was all delight, for he had heard of England. "It is an island, is it not?" he asked.

Mexico, however, seemed very far away. Yet with Hakkouki, he thought, one surely might go anywhere.

They journeyed first to London, where, within a radius of thirty miles, the lavender is grown largely. In Surrey alone there are three hundred and fifty acres devoted to it.

It is only within recent years that it has been cultivated in England for the purpose of producing essential oil, although dried lavender flowers have been used from time immemorial. Even the Romans made use of them in scenting their baths.

From London our travellers took train to Hertfordshire, and alighted at a station called Hitchin. In this place two thousand gallons of oil are produced each year. As the gathering of flowers and distillation takes place in July, they were just in time to watch the most interesting part of the process. The plants are set out in early spring in rows a yard apart. When three years old they are at their best, and at seven years, having made much wood, they are uprooted and new plants set out.

As they entered the distillery, the strong aromatic odor of lavender was almost overpowering.

"Look out for the bees," said the man who was conducting them about.

Thousands of the insects were clinging tenaciously to the tiny flowers; many of them even preferring death in the huge boiling caldrons to separation.

"How much better things are arranged here than in Bulgaria," said François.

Everything was done to guard against waste. The covers of the copper pots were closed down tightly, and luted with clay or linseed meal to prevent the fumes from escaping. The copper stills hold two hundred gallons, and each batch produces about a pint of oil. After the still is filled with flowers pressed tightly down, boiling water is poured over them, and fires lighted beneath the kettles to keep them boiling. The cover is shaped like a huge tobacco pipe, with the bowl turned downward over the still. The process of distillation is the same as that used in Bulgaria and France. Lavender is used largely in combination with other perfumes for making eau-de-cologne and for scenting soaps. When first distilled, it has an unpleasant odor, but in a twelvemonth it mellows down and is fit for use.

England alone produces thirty thousand gallons of oil a year. It is also used in medicine as a tonic for asthma and hysteria, and many forms of nervous diseases. Sixty pounds of good flowers yield about sixteen fluid ounces of oil.

From Liverpool Hakkouki found he could take a steamship for Vera Cruz on the eastern coast of Mexico, stopping only at

New Orleans. Before leaving, he purchased not only sea-clothing, but books.

"We are now, in truth, going among foreigners and must learn their language," he said to François.

He half planned to leave his valuables in charge of a banker in Liverpool, but he had not yet learned the confidence of business, and felt really safer to carry his possessions with him.

François and he devoted their entire attention aboard ship to the study of the Spanish language, and were pleased to find, upon their arrival in Vera Cruz, that they could at least ask for what they wanted.

At New Orleans, the only stopping-place on the voyage, their attention was called to a noisy dispute just as they were leaving the wharf. Leaning over the rail, they found two men defying the porters and quartermasters, and hurriedly throwing their trunks, hand-bags, and engineering instruments aboard.

While one, a tall man with blond hair and mustache, stood midway up the gang-plank and carried on a vociferous conversation with his opponents, the other, who was small and dark, did the work.

"I tell you," said the tall one, "there's plenty of time if you fellows would only get to work. Hand along that trunk there."

"Get off the gang-plank!" called a voice from the bridge.

The tall man, however, would not hear. Quite at his ease, he held his ground.

"Give me the valise, Vaughn," called he to his companion, who was at this moment on the pier, breathless from running back and forth over the gang-plank.

"I'll pitch you into the water if you don't get off! We're ten minutes late already."

"Oh, you're off. Your ticker is wrong. Here's the correct time," drawled the tall fellow, taking out his watch. "Plenty of time," he continued; "only one more valise. There you are, Vaughn!"

And after his companion had passed him, he slowly walked inboard amid execrations from the men and laughter from the passengers. Bracing back, with his idle hands in his pockets, and a broad smile on his face, he addressed the crowd: —

"Begad! Any one would think this was an express train," he said.

No one could resist the contagion of his merriment. A few minutes later, the second officer, with a memorandum book and pencil, stepped up to him, and in a severe voice demanded his name.

"Why, Mulligan, of course," he replied.

The crowd laughed.

"No fault of mine either. 'Twas the old man gave me the name," he explained with a smile.

"Where do you come from?" asked the officer.

"New Orleans," answered Mulligan.

"I know that," said the officer, impatiently.

"If ye know it then, why are ye asking me?"

"I mean, where is your home, you scoundrel," said the angry officer.

"My home?" ejaculated Mulligan. "Tell me, if a man has had a thing and lost it, can he tell where it is?"

"Sometimes," answered the officer, fretfully.

"Well, where's your temper?" said Mulligan. Then he threw back his head with a peal of laughter, which was caught up and ran round the whole deck.

It sobered and quieted the officer, who, seeing that he was in danger of losing his dignity as well, said quietly: —

"I want your name and address. I want to know where to find you on account of this disturbance at the wharf."

Mulligan took the book, wrote something in it, and handed it back to the officer. After reading it, the latter asked, "Are you an American?"

"Why, yes, I was brought up in Boston."

"Were you born there?"

"No, I was born in Ireland."

"Then aren't you an Irishman?"

"An Irishman! If a man is born in a stable, is he a horse?"

Amid the roars of laughter which followed this, the officer saw fit to withdraw.

Later, when Vaughn had finished gathering his belongings together, François, who was much interested in these impertinent fellows, and had followed them about, was delighted to hear them speaking in French. As they were speaking confidentially, François thought it proper to let them know that he understood them.

"Excuse me, Monsieur," he said to Mulligan, "I overheard you speaking in French."

"Certainly," said Mulligan. "A Frenchman are you, or from New Orleans?"

"No, I'm from France," replied François. "Do Frenchmen come from New Orleans?"

"Vaughn's from New Orleans. He's French. I've lived there five years, and I'm almost French myself. I suppose you know that many Americans use your polite language. Vaughn and I are going to work on the railroad near Tampico. Lots of engineers have been sent out. Won't you sit down and talk awhile? What are you going to Mexico for?"

"I'm going out with M. Hakkouki to find out all about vanilla."

"Hakkouki," said Mulligan, smiling; "that's a strange name."

"Yes," said François; "he is a Persian."

"Is that his last name?"

"No, it is his Christian name."

Mulligan then threw back his head and laughed loudly.

"How can a Mohammedan have a Christian name?"

François thought best not to discuss Hakkouki's affairs.

"Do you expect to have trouble from the man who questioned you?" he asked. "I saw him taking your name."

"Trouble? Well, I'll let you know later," laughed Mulligan. "He wanted to know where my home was, where I lived. How can I tell? Here I am, an orphan, without a cent in the world nor a friend, except Vaughn." He nudged Vaughn affectionately. "How's a fellow going to know where he lives until he gets where he lives?"

François looked with great, wondering eyes upon this big, jolly man, who looked so rich and well dressed; and who was describing himself just such a beggar as he had been.

"Why," continued Mulligan, "it reminded me of a servant girl who once lived with my mother. Some time after she had left our employ, my mother met her on the street and said, 'Well, Mary, where are you living now?' 'Please, mum,' said Mary, 'I ain't living nowhere now. I'm married.' You see," he went on, "we sent the baggage down last night so there would be nothing to do but take ourselves down this morning, but even then we ran all the way."

"You didn't run fast enough," suggested François.

"Oh, yes, we did, but we didn't start soon enough; *n'est ce pas*, Vaughn?" said the big man, giving his friend another dig in the ribs, at which Vaughn moved somewhat farther away.

During the voyage the two Americans possessed the greatest attraction for François. He watched with curious interest the extravagance of these men without a cent in the world. He thought it strange that two persons of one race should be so utterly unlike. In spite of their professed poverty, they dressed well, were shaved daily by the barber, had their boots blackened by the boot-black aboard, and spent money to an extent that made François wonder.

There were a number of engineers aboard; for the building of the railroad and the improvement of the harbor at Tampico were great undertakings. Until this time Vera

Cruz had been the only good harbor on the east coast of Mexico. Tampico is to-day considered the only good harbor on the east coast.

François saw much of the engineers up to the time of arrival in Vera Cruz. He also took a great liking to one of the passengers named Shaw, who spent his time laughing at everything which fell from Mulligan's lips.

Under the very walls of the castle fortress San Juan de Ulua, the steamer dropped anchor. Even then they were almost a mile from the "mole," where seems concentrated the life of the city. In clear weather the volcano of Orijaba can be seen sixty miles inland, its profile sharply cut against the blue sky.

Vera Cruz is the spot where Cortez landed in 1519, and raised the cross in the name of Spain. He called the volcano the star of the sea, and it well deserves its name, for its crystal peak, borne on high 17,500 feet, can be seen one hundred miles away.

"This fortress," said Vaughn, who had been in Mexico before, "is said to be impregnable, although it has been captured every time it has been besieged. The dungeon, which is below the water level, is still made use of for political prisoners."

They were so near the fortress that a cannon, which boomed in salute, fairly jarred the deck of the steamship.

"Sure, we're all deaf from the noise of it," said Mulligan. "I knew a man once who was made completely deaf by the explosion from a cannon near him, and for two weeks after he couldn't hear a thing unless it was written."

They boarded the small boats shaded by awnings and propelled by boatmen clad in immaculate garments of white, and were soon at the quay. Vera Cruz is one of the hottest as well as the most unhealthy of any of the cities of Mexico, and yet, by strange anomaly, it is likewise the cleanest. The architecture is a mixture of Moorish and Spanish. Since many of the inhabitants are German and

French merchants, this foreign influence is also noticeable. The prevalence of yellow fever makes it necessary for all the wealthy residents to have homes in a higher altitude, and Jalapa (pronounced Halapa), four thousand feet above the sea-level, is chosen for this purpose. Though Vera Cruz has suffered more than any other city in Mexico from plagues, pirates, and hurricanes, to-day it exists as a prosperous and well-conditioned city.

It was sacked by the pirates Agramont and Lorencillo in 1568; a terrible fire swept over it in 1618; destroyed again by pirates and three hundred and sixty of its inhabitants killed in 1683; bombarded by the Spaniards in 1822; attacked by the French in 1838; suffered from cannonade by the American fleet in 1847; and nearly destroyed by a hurricane in 1856. In 1861 the "intervention" fleet made its appearance in the harbor, and destroyed all its shipping, and was held in possession of the French until

1867. Since that time the cause of freedom has been triumphant, and nothing has occurred to interrupt its career of commercial prosperity. Vera Cruz bears the distinguished title of "heroic," granted by Congress in honor of the many sieges it has gallantly sustained.

Hakkouki was joined by Mulligan, Vaughn, and Shaw, when he left the boat at the wharf, to the great delight of François. Having ordered their baggage sent to a hotel, which they found ranked with the best, they walked on toward the Plaza, an attractive open space with marble walks and wind-blown trees. Mulligan was searching for an opportunity to get his boots blacked, for they had become wet in the small boat. The Mexicans have little use for such a convenience, as they generally go barefoot, both men and women.

The wealthy classes are seldom seen on the street, particularly the women.

Soon they were greeted by the sign, "Boots blacked within."

"As one might expect in this place," said Mulligan. "Why should they black the inside of your boot instead of the outside?"

The place was evidently meant to accommodate Americans, for the sign was in English.

After a "shine" they walked on together. Their progress was impeded by a funeral procession, and they were ordered to stand with uncovered heads by the gentlemanly policeman. It was a procession of great pomp and ostentation, gorgeous uniforms, and flowers.

"It must be the king's funeral," whispered François.

"There is no king; he is a president," said Mulligan.

"Whose do you suppose it is?" said François, burning with curiosity.

"Well, I can't be sure, but I'm after thinking it's the man's in the coffin," whispered Mulligan, in awestruck tones. "And a fragile-looking coffin it is, too," he added, for through the glass hearse it could be plainly seen.

"I heard of a man once who had a stone coffin made for him," whispered François.

"That was good," answered Mulligan, under his breath. "A stone coffin would last a lifetime, anyway."

They stopped next at a bank; for the engineers were going into the "wilds," as they called it, and could take nothing of value with them. Hakkouki was much interested in the institution.

"Why don't you put your money in this savings bank?" asked Mulligan of him.

"How can I draw it out again when I want it?" asked Hakkouki.

"It's easy enough," said Mulligan. "If you put it in to-day, you can get it out to-morrow by giving a fortnight's notice."

François laughed heartily. To him the big Irish-American was the funniest man in the world. He saw, too, that Mulligan enjoyed being laughed at.

"Did you take after your father?" asked François, thinking of Mulligan's Irish birth.

"No," was the answer. "I didn't take after my father, for he left me nothing to take."

Most of that day they spent in going about to equip themselves for their respective journeys. Mulligan had brought with him what he thought he should require. But Hakkouki and François had nothing suitable for the climate, nor had Vaughn. The day was so warm that Vaughn insisted on purchasing some true Mexican clothing.

"No one knows," said he, "how to dress in any country so well as the people who live in it."

"What, you!" exclaimed Mulligan, with astonishment, "you complaining of the heat? Why, friends, he is so cold-blooded that a dog, who bit him in the leg last winter, froze to death."

"Do you think Mulligan always tells the truth?" asked François, in a whisper of Hakkouki.

They were waiting in the front part of the clothing shop, while Vaughn, who, as he said, "was already overcome with the heat of the tropics," was decking himself out in Mexican clothes. At last he appeared. Being small and dark-hued, he looked the part well, but managed his serape rather awkwardly.

This garment is the long, narrow shawl no Mexican ever goes without. As the air grows cold at night, he draws his serape close up round his neck, and even covers the lower part of his face. The great sombrero set jauntily upon Vaughn's curling hair, but he was, nevertheless, greeted with a roar of laughter.

"Where did you get those trousers?" asked Mulligan, his face red from laughing, and the tears glistening on his cheeks.

"I got them where they grew," answered Vaughn, indignantly.

"Then, by my conscience," said Mulligan, "you pulled them a year too soon."

"I wouldn't wear such trousers as those," said François.

"Well, now," said Vaughn, "if it is as hot as this to-morrow, I'll bet you a dollar every one of you will be wearing them."

"I neither bet nor gamble," answered François.

"Well," whispered Mulligan to Shaw, "if he is no gambler, he's no better."

And sure enough, they all purchased just such clothes as Vaughn had bought, the next day.

"This would be a fine place to live," said Vaughn, later, as they sat reclining at their ease in the comfortable chairs and hammocks of the patio.

"It would, indeed, be a good place to live, if it weren't for the heat and yellow fever," said Hakkouki.

"And bugs and spiders," added Shaw.

"And this system of caste," added Mulligan, "which keeps all the pretty girls tied up in the back yards for fear they'll marry an Indian or something worse."

"Yes," assented François, "it must be

especially hard for you Americans, who have your liberty and no aristocracy; you have no aristocracy in America, have you?" he asked Mulligan.

"What do you mean by aristocracy?" said Mulligan, who was a little touchy on the subject.

"I mean people who do no work, and whose fathers never did," answered François, innocently.

"Oh, yes," said Mulligan, "we have plenty of them, but we call them tramps."

The little party was such a congenial one that François felt sad at the thought of parting next day, and with his tendency toward sentiment, he told his companions so.

"On my word, it is too bad," said Vaughn. "I shall feel the parting myself."

"And Mulligan also?" asked François, timidly, for he wanted the affection of this big, merry fellow.

"Mulligan!" laughed Vaughn. "The

only parting that ever troubled him was the parting of his back hair."

"Very good," said Mulligan, "but rather too pointed, as the codfish said when he swallowed the bait."

CHAPTER VIII.

FORTUNE FROWNS.

AT three the next morning the porter of the hotel drew Hakkouki and François forth from the cell which the proprietor had assigned to them as a bedroom, and led the way to the station through dark and cool streets. They went by steam sixteen miles, and then changed to a tramway for Jalapa; for in the vicinity of this town the vanilla is produced in its greatest luxuriance.

Three cars comprised the train, divided into first, second, and third class, and each drawn by four mules. Along the route numerous black crosses marked the graves where murdered men were buried. The road rose four thousand feet within the seventy miles' distance; and as they were pulled up by mules, they felt satisfied to reach Jalapa in twelve hours. The scenery was magnificent, as it had been all the way after reaching the uplands, and Hakkouki was gratified to find good accommodations in the Hotel Vera Aruzana. It was a low building, running completely round an open court called the patio, where fountains played and flowers and birds abounded.

Jalapa signifies the place of water and land. Certainly the water is in evidence; for here, like Bergen in Norway, it may be said to rain eight days in the week. The rain-filled clouds from the Gulf strike the cool hills only to pour their contents upon them. The town is famous for the loveliest flowers and most beautiful women in all Mexico. From its gardens may be gathered the fruits and flowers of every zone. Although the women of Mexico have almost invariably dark skins and black eyes, those of Jalapa are decided blondes. Their complexions are said to rival the delicacy of the petals of the orchids which grow in such abundance there. Among the special products of the vicinity is the aromatic vanilla plant, which is indigenous. It grows wild in the forests and proves a great source of income to the industrious native gatherers. The Indians, who still reside in their primitive villages, are restricted in the harvest season by the Alcade, who apportions to each his share in the labor.

The morning following Hakkouki's arrival he set forth with an Alcade for the woods to see the vanilla growing.

"The vanilla has been known here since the first Spaniard stepped upon the soil," said the Alcade. "Chocolate flavored with vanilla was placed before Cortez by Montezuma. Long before that, however, it was highly appreciated by the Aztec nobles and commanded, even in those days, a liberal price."

"I have read that it was first brought to Europe as a perfume in 1510, ten years before tobacco was known," said Hakkouki.

"Here is the plant," called François, who had run on ahead. "I know it by your description."

"Yes, that is vanilla," said the Alcade.

It was a tall climber, with long, succulent green stems, white aërial roots, and bright green leaves.

"The native mode of culture," said the Alcade, "is to plant the cuttings of the vine beneath large trees, for all it needs is shade and moisture. They are left then to grow and twine around supports as best they can. Occasionally, for the sake of convenience, vines are trained around trees to prevent their attaining a greater height than nine feet."

As it was late in the season, there were few pods left on the vines; but Hakkouki obtained one of a light yellow color, which was about eight inches long and one-half an inch broad.

"This is not the season in which we gather, but I will take you where you can see the bean cured," said the Alcade. "I suppose you know that the vanilla of Mexico is superior to that of other countries like Tahiti and Reunion Island."

"Why is that?" asked Hakkouki.

"It is our peculiar soil and climate, and also the help which the insects give us," answered the Alcade. "Here they carry the pollen from one flower to the pistil of another; whereas in other places this must be done by artificial inoculation."

"Oh, yes," said Hakkouki; "I have read that women and children work with a small stick like a pencil to carry the pollen."

"Oh, what difficult work it must be!" said François.

The flowers in blossom on the vines were a greenish yellow, here and there touched with white.

"The pods of these flowers will be ready for gathering next March or April," said the

Alcade. "The longer the pods grow, the greater is considered their value."

During their stay in Jalapa, they visited the homes of the people who cured and dried the beans on mats before their mud houses, great care being required to prevent their being wet by the constant showers. The pods are left on the vine until they show a light yellow tinge, then they are plunged half a minute in very hot, if not actually boiling, water. When soft and brown and ready to dry, they are carefully and regularly pressed between the fingers and slightly anointed with oil.

Some of the proprietors had boxes with glass covers for their pods to dry in. After fifteen days' exposure to the sun, they are taken to the building for drying, which is made throughout of corrugated iron, and contains tiers of wire shelves. The beans are laid on the top one at first, and removed to a lower level later. When properly cured, they are of a rich dark chocolate color, and perfectly free from moisture. The pods are selected according to their size, the longest ones being considered the most valuable, and tied up in packets of fifty. These packets, after being tied in the middle, and again near each end, are carefully put up in closely fitting tin boxes. When vanilla pods are in good condition, they become covered with an efflorescence of needles, called vanillin. The interior of the bean is then soft, unctuous, and balsamic. In order to obtain the essence or perfume, one-half pound of such pods are cut up small and put into one gallon of pure alcohol. The ingredients must remain together four weeks, then all the strength of the vanilla will be found in the spirit, which may be strained off clear and bright. Extract of clematis, heliotrope, wallflower, etc., contain about half vanilla essence. The United States is the principal market for these beans.

During their two weeks' stay, Hakkouki and François had become Mexicanized to the point of enjoying the tortilla, which takes the place of bread, and pulque, which takes the place of wine. The latter is said to be nourishing and quite uninjurious. It is made from the maguey plant, which may be called the "general utility store" of the Mexicans. From it they obtain not only pulque, but paper, twine, and thread. Poor people thatch their houses with the leaves, placing one over the other like shingles. Ropes are also made from the fibre.

The country about Jalapa is particularly interesting on account of its luxuriant vegetation. Wild fruits are so plenty that they ripen and decay undisturbed by the hands of the natives. There are fifty or sixty species of singing birds, and seventy kinds suitable for food.

Toward the latter part of their stay, Hakkouki and François, while walking in the woods, suddenly came upon a figure apparently holding up a tree. Beneath a great sombrero, with brim little less than a yard wide, stood a woollen shirt and leather breeches girt about with a pistol-belt full of cartridges and revolvers. A rifle hand against the left arm, while the right hand of all this furniture was stroking a beard belonging to a countenance not altogether unfamiliar. It was Mulligan. But how changed! His hair, which he had been wont to anoint with oil and part in the middle, was awry, and had reminiscences of the blanket he last slept in. His face was a flaring red, his hands blistered, and his once bulky form had shrunk almost to a shadow.

"Mulligan!" cried François, excitedly rushing forward to grasp his hand. "Oh! How thin you are!"

"Just look at Vaughn," said Mulligan, pointing down the hill to his companion, who was almost hidden behind the theodolite. "But you ought to see Shaw," he continued. "He is thinner than Vaughn and I put together."

"Have you been ill?" queried François, eagerly.

"Indeed, I came near dying last night. I lay speechless all the night, crying, 'Water! water!' and my head ached that bad I couldn't lift it from the pillow until I got up and walked about a bit."

"And where do you live now?" asked François.

"There," answered Mulligan, pointing to a very small hut. "We built it, and I think it will stand as long as the world does, and longer." Not a smile had yet crossed his countenance. "I'd ask you to come in and sit awhile, but the place isn't large enough for Mr. Hakkouki and me to get into."

"No," acquiesced François, measuring the two with his eye. "Yet you and Vaughn and Shaw all sleep there."

"Not a bit of it. None of us sleep. We stay there nights, and eat outdoors."

"Why do you go so heavily armed?" inquired Hakkouki.

"On account of these thundering thieves of Mexicans. They'd steal the very hands off your body, if you should lay them down by mistake."

"What kind of a pistol is that?" asked Hakkouki, pointing to the huge weapon in Mulligan's belt.

"It's what they call a horse-pistol," he answered.

"Why do they call it that?" asked François.

"For the reason that it kicks, I suppose," replied Mulligan. "In this country 'twould better be a mule-pistol. Shaw!" he yelled suddenly, "will you come here and hold the guns and ammunition?" Then turning to Hakkouki and François, he said, "And I'll sit down and talk with you awhile."

Shaw left his work some distance away, and came toward them. As Mulligan spread his tired limbs upon the ground, he groaned, "What's the use of a man's working himself to death to get a living? It's a hard time we've had, to say nothing of the valuable goods we've lost. The thieves have followed us constantly. Up to this Vaughn has held on to the theodolite, but now he's so weak it's holding on to him. Oh, it's an awful country!"

Then, as Vaughn trudged up the hill with his precious theodolite, to join them, Mulligan began to sing, "Green grow the rushes, oh!" the song from which the word "Gringo" was taken when the American troops went into Mexico.

Vaughn was certainly "blue." He immediately began to growl about the country and the rain and the food.

"Oh, the rain! Did you ever see anything like it?" asked Mulligan.

They were all comfortably seated on the ground but Shaw, who kept guard.

"The rain certainly falls here constantly," said Hakkouki, "and yet the country is dry."

"Right you are," said Mulligan. "I crossed the bed of a stream the other day without a drop of water in it. 'Twas all sand; and I put up a sign: 'Take notice!' says I; 'when this board is under water, this stream is impassable.'"

At which they all laughed for the first time since their reunion.

"And I've heard," continued Mulligan, encouraged, "that the streams are so dry that the fish have to wear dusters to keep their clothing from being spoiled."

"Now you're yourself again," said Hakkouki.

"It's only a little decent food I'm needing to be myself," said he. "If the other fellows would come up to relieve us in time, we'd go down to Vera Cruz with you and get a bite. Have you met any of the others in your wanderings around these woods?"

"No," said Hakkouki; "nothing but Mexicans and Indians."

"Say," continued Mulligan. "There was a funny thing happened yesterday. I went out with my shot-gun to get a change of food in the way of a bird or something, and I came upon Jacobs on the bridge. 'Jacobs,' says I, 'how are you?' 'Pretty well, thank you, Dorherty,' says he. 'Dorherty?' says I; 'that's not my name.' So with that, we looked at each other again, and sure enough! It was neither of us!"

"We are going back to Vera Cruz day after to-morrow," said Hakkouki. "Can't you go with us?"

"Indeed, I think the other fellows will be along by that time, and then we'll go, sure; for it's starving we are. But we must go to another hotel. You see, I had a letter from the proprietor of that last."

"Did you?" asked Hakkouki, interested; while Vaughn laughed immoderately.

"Ay, he asked me to send him the amount of his bill," said Mulligan, seriously.

"And," said Vaughn, choking with laughter, "Mulligan wrote back, 'The amount is $25.93. Yours respectfully, J. W. Mulligan.'"

With the laughter that followed, Hakkouki and François rose to go, for night was closing in, and the air getting chilly.

"Ah!" sighed Mulligan. "What a blessing it is that night never comes till late in the day, when a man's tired, and can't work any more! But we'll go to Vera Cruz with you. What time does the train start?"

"We are going down by the tramway. They leave at twelve o'clock."

When the mule train left Jalapa, two days later, there were Hakkouki, Mulligan, Vaughn, François, and one very elegant Mexican gentleman, crowded into the one small first-class carriage. The route lay over the old national road, by way of Cerro Gordo. This hamlet, the place where General Scott outflanked and defeated Santa Anna April 18, 1847, now consists of a few mud cabins in a tumble-down condition. The Mexican gentleman seated beside Mulligan also pointed out the birthplace of General Santa Anna, the most notorious of Mexico's soldiers of fortune.

"We used to be overrun with brigands here," said the Mexican gentleman, "and travelling over this road was accompanied by fear as well as danger. General Bazaine, however, put a stop to that. Hearing of the dangers, he took ten of his most expert sharpshooters, and, dressing some of them as women, they boarded the coach. The driver was sworn to secrecy, under threat of being shot if he disobeyed orders. On the route the brigands stopped them, ordered them to throw up their hands, and assisted the first passenger, who was a lady, to alight. In an instant, however, the lady's cape was thrown up, and, shooting with a revolver in each hand, she finished two of the brigands at once. The next morning fourteen gentlemen of the road were found killed. Only one of the band escaped."

Having finished his exciting tale, he felt for his handkerchief to mop his fevered brow. Failing to find it, he turned suddenly to Mulligan.

"I'll thank you to return my handkerchief," said he.

Mulligan turned purple. He was about to speak, when the Mexican discovered his property on the floor. He excused himself profusely, saying it was a mistake.

"Sure, Señor, it is a mutual mistake," said Mulligan. "You took me for a thief, and I took you for a gentleman."

After that the Mexican was left out of the conversation.

"It would be a great convenience," said Mulligan, who could not live without talking, "if the mile-stones were placed just a little nearer each other."

They were soon in sight of the great convent of San Francisco, supposed to have been built by Cortez, and a most picturesque ruin.

"The Spaniards were certainly artistic," said Hakkouki.

Arriving in Vera Cruz, they went to a new hotel, hoping that the proprietor was not first cousin of the last one. There they did their best to make up for the food which they had not eaten during the previous two weeks.

Hakkouki, who had determined to proceed to the Philippines next, in order to study the floral growth of those islands, went out alone to investigate the best method for getting there.

Among the ships in the harbor, he found one upon which he could get passage around the Horn. Though this would doubtless take longer than crossing Mexico, and shipping from the port of San Blas, it seemed to Hakkouki more desirable, as he wished to see something of sea life.

On his way back to the hotel he called at the bank for his valuable suit. As many of the sights of the town interested him, he walked along leisurely, and took little notice of the direction in which he was going. Presently, he found himself in a narrow alley, quite strange to him, and he realized that he had lost his way. He was about to retrace his steps when the precious bundle he carried was suddenly snatched from him, and he himself thrown violently to the ground. Before he could recover, a terrific blow upon the head left him senseless.

When Hakkouki came to, he was lying in a white cot in the hospital, with his head bandaged.

"How long have I been here?" he inquired of the nurse.

"This is the tenth day," she replied. "You have been delirious ever since you came in, and we almost despaired of your life."

"Has any one been to see me?" he asked.

"No one," answered the nurse.

Hakkouki groaned. He wondered what had become of François and his other friends. That afternoon he sent a message to the hotel, asking François to come and see him, but the messenger returned alone. The French boy, he said, had searched the city for a week for his companion, and then, supposing he had been deserted, shipped as a steward upon a vessel bound for the United States.

Thus Hakkouki found himself friendless and penniless in a strange country.

CHAPTER IX.

FORTUNE SMILES.

HAKKOUKI emerged from the hospital thin, but hopeful. In spite of his condition and his loss of money, he never once thought of giving up his search for knowledge, but determined to follow his ambitious undertaking to the end, and to win.

Through the influence of an American merchant, whose acquaintance Hakkouki had chanced to make, he obtained a position as ordinary seaman aboard a New Bedford whaler named the *Florence*, and bound for the Pacific. Notwithstanding the hardships which he knew he should be obliged to undergo in such a capacity, he felt very happy at the prospect. Not only was he moving in the right direction, but he hoped that upon such a voyage he might learn something about that most precious of all perfume bases, — ambergris.

The new sailor was very seasick and miserable for the first ten days out. After that, however, he began to enjoy the healthy, invigorating life. As he was a willing and a powerful man on a rope, quick to learn, and good-natured, he soon became a favorite with both officers and crew. By the time the ship had "rounded the Horn," he was looked upon as one of the most valuable men aboard.

The *Florence* cruised about the South Pacific for some time without much success, when one morning, in the vicinity of the Galapagos Islands, there came from aloft the welcome cry : —

"There she blo-o-o-ows!"

Instantly all hands turned out, and the officers gave orders in quick succession. The boats were provisioned, and swung out in the davits, and everything put in order for the next command.

The second mate, who, in the meantime, had gone aloft with his glass, now hailed the excited captain on deck.

"They are sperm whales, sir! Four of them! Heading to the north'ard!"

"Back the main yard!" immediately cried the skipper.

As soon as the vessel was hove to, the two boats were lowered; the captain taking charge of one, and the mate steering the other. In the latter Hakkouki found himself.

Both boats pulled rapidly toward the whales, and the hearts of all beat high at the thought of making a haul at last. The captain, being in advance, got fast first.

"It's only a small cow," said the mate, contemptuously. "He's welcome to her. I'm going for the big bull to wind'ard."

So to the windward they pulled, and it was not long before Hakkouki, looking over the gunwale of the boat, saw that they were passing the whale's immense flukes.

The next moment the mate cried to the harpooner, "Now, Johnny! Send it home!"

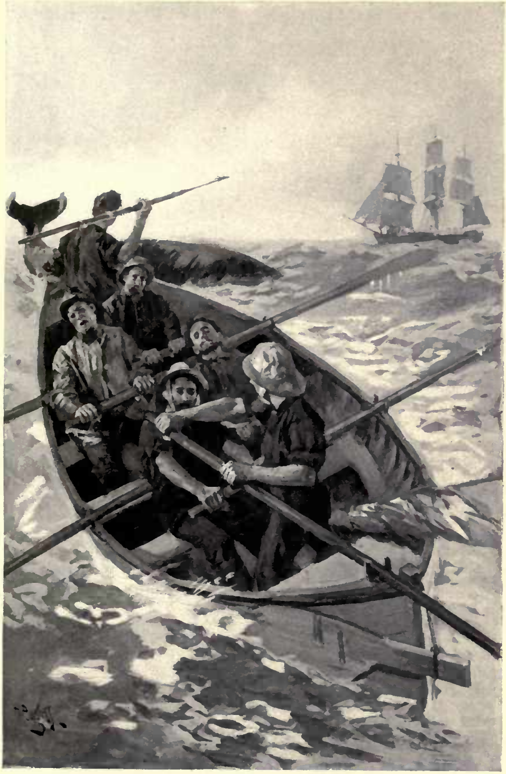
Just as the Portuguese was about to strike, however, he lost his balance and fell overboard. Instantly the whale elevated his tail and "sounded," while the mate gave vent to a volley of abuse, such as Hakkouki had never heard before. The unfortunate Portuguese was hauled aboard, however, and the chase of the big bull continued.

"Easy all," whispered the mate, as they came near the leviathan again.

Johnny, the Portuguese, stood in the bow this time with a look of revenge upon his dark face. As he braced himself against the "cleat," it was apparent that he intended to get even with that whale.

"Steady, now, Johnny, boy," again whispered the mate.

Suddenly, when the boat was within ten feet of the whale, Johnny drew back his arm and darted. As the keen harpoon buried



"'STEADY, NOW, JOHNNY, BOY!'"

itself in the blubber, the flukes of the monster went up, and with a mighty splash he dived below.

"Stern all!" yelled the mate, and the men obeyed just in time to prevent the boat being swamped.

The line at once began to run out so fast that the wood fairly smoked with the friction, and they were obliged to wet it.

"My land!" said the mate, as he looked anxiously at the tubs. "How far down is he going?"

A moment later, however, the line slackened, and the men were ordered to face forward and "haul line." As this meant that the whale was coming up, the mate then took the place of the harpooner, and stood ready to use the lance. After a long, hard pull, the boat was brought cautiously up to the fleeing whale.

"Pull, boys!" cried the officer, as soon as the flukes were passed in safely. "Wood and black skin!"

The next moment he plunged the sharp lance deep into the monster's vitals, and churned it up and down until blood was spouted.

Now that the whale had hoisted what is known as the "red flag," the boat retreated; for in his death "flurry" the whale is most dangerous of all. For a quarter of an hour he thrashed helplessly about; then, with a sound almost like a human groan, he turned on his side, dead.

This was the beginning of the *Florence's* luck. From that time whales were captured with a regularity that became almost monotonous. As the crew were "on shares," however, they worked willingly enough.

Two months later the ship's hold was full of oil, and as all hands were "spoiling" for some of their pay-day and a run ashore, the captain headed for Batavia, where he knew he could tranship his valuable cargo.

But the luck of the *Florence* was not over yet. Before reaching Java she picked up a huge lump of ambergris floating on the sea, which, together with her load of oil, gave every man aboard of her a small fortune.

Hakkouki examined the valuable mass with much curiosity. When first brought aboard, it was black and almost as soft as putty, but after it had dried, it became a light gray color and fairly hard. Intermixed with the mass were many small cuttlefish beaks, which scientists consider proves that ambergris is a morbid secretion of the sperm whale. As it dried it gave out a sweet earthy odor. The value of ambergris, however, does not lie in its perfume, but in its power to fix or hold other odors in combination.

The weight of the piece of ambergris found by the *Lucky Florence,* as she was afterward called, was one hundred and eighty pounds. When sold in Batavia, it fetched the sum of fifty-seven thousand six hundred dollars, which was divided pro rata among the ship's company.

As soon as the vessel arrived at Batavia, Hakkouki asked to be paid off; and with the goodly sum he received in his pocket, he once more continued his search for the knowledge of perfumes.

CHAPTER X.

THE GARDEN OF THE EAST.

WHEN Hakkouki, liberated from his long voyage at sea, found himself flying up the Molenvliet (the chief thoroughfare in Batavia) in a comfortable, even luxurious, carriage, he experienced most lively emotions of surprise and pleasure. The swift ponies, driven by a brown coachman in a long red calico jacket, seemed to Hakkouki possessed of wings.

It was a long drive to the hotel, which was a most imposing building. He was allotted a fair-sized room, opening on to a court, with other rooms opening to the right, left, and in fact all around him.

In front of the doors of these rooms sat people in every stage of dishabille. There seemed to be no privacy, and fortunately, the situation being as it was, no shyness.

As Hakkouki's clothes were by this time very much worn and out of place, his first care was to purchase a native suit. This consists of a sarong, which is a short, close-fitting petticoat, and a white linen jacket, called a kabaya. The Dutch colonists have adopted this native costume, as being most suitable to the climate, and seldom wear any other, except on important occasions.

By the time Hakkouki had rigged himself in his new clothes, the midday meal was ready, and he had an opportunity to sit at the much-talked-of rice table. Spreading a foundation of rice on the plate, one choses from the numerous viands presented by the servant, and places this, whether meat, fish, eggs, or delicacy, upon the rice, partaking of both together. Bread was not offered.

While at table Hakkouki made the acquaintance of a French gentleman, M.

Belivier, who volunteered much information about the country, and later gave Hakkouki a letter introducing him to the manager of his estate at Sinagar. He told Hakkouki that it was necessary for him first to get a government permit to remain upon the island; and advised him to hire a native servant. Through the kind offices of his new friend, Hakkouki secured an intelligent Javanese "boy" by the name of Ah-Gap, who, having previously been the servant of a French geologist, could speak French.

A few days later Hakkouki and Ah-Gap set out for Sinagar, which is some distance inland. It is impossible to describe the beautiful scenery of Java in any way to do it justice. The climate is so mild and moist that the foliage and vegetation is luxuriant beyond compare. The variety of trees which are indigenous and not to be found elsewhere is greater than in any other part of the world.

Hakkouki was going to Sinagar chiefly to see the trees from which the perfumes ylang-ylang and frangipanni are produced. In this locality both trees flourish in great abundance; although they grow in many other parts of the island, as well as the Philippines, and are cultivated in India and the tropics generally.

The trees grow wild, and the blossoms are gathered as they fall from the tree; but upon the large coffee and sugar estates the trees are under the control of the wodena, a native who is the local head of the estate.

Hakkouki stayed at the house of the wodena and was taken out by him and a good half-dozen followers in uniform, to view the estate. The natives on the place bowed low before him, and if they did not promptly go to earth, were reminded by occasional shouts from the followers, or their movements were hurried by prods from the poles of office. Ah-Gap, having once been told by his master to stand up, stretched himself to his full height, and followed with a dignity almost worthy of Hakkouki himself. The wodena did not like this manner; nor did he enjoy the childish glee with which Ah-Gap ran beneath the first cananga tree he saw, holding his great bamboo hat, and filling it with the huge brilliant yellow flowers from which oil of ylang-ylang is obtained.

The oil of ylang-ylang and frangipanni is prepared in much the same way as that of the rose, but the flowers of both these trees are sold in the markets all over Java, for perfume.

The petals of the cananga dry easily, even in the moist climate of Java, and when sewed up into small bags, they retain their spicy fragrance for years. The frangipanni flowers are very different from the great yellow flowers of the cananga. They remind one in shape and cluster of the mayflower (trailing arbutus) of New England. In color they are an exquisite white and gold, and are sometimes called "bo-flowers."

"Why do not the people wear these lovely blossoms in their hair as they do the large cananga?" asked Hakkouki of the wodena.

"Frangipanni is the flower of the dead," answered he, solemnly.

And not only is this sweet flower associated with funeral rites and graves, but it is the religious flower, and is a symbol of faith. It is sticky and unpleasant to the touch when pulled from the tree, and the stem exudes a thick milk; but after the flowers have fallen to the ground, they may be handled more easily, and the small flowers retain their spotless waxen perfection and thick, fleshy petals even for two days. We call them frangipanni; but although this name is known to the natives, they will not use it. They consider that an Italian marquis had no right to give it his name in preference to their beautiful name, which signifies "flowers of the golden heart."

Hakkouki gathered some of these flowers to dry, as he had the others, and put them into small bags. As they returned, the wodena explained to Hakkouki the system of forced labor which the Dutch exercise over the natives, and later on gave him a very delightful surprise.

After supper he was led forth to a hastily improvised apartment to witness the "Bedaya," or dancing girls. This, Ah-Gap said, was a mark of great respect, as these girls are summoned to dance only in the presence of royalty or persons of high rank. They were dressed in the brightest of colors, adorned with many jewels, and had their arms and legs dusted with brilliant yellow powder. They were fourteen or fifteen years of age, and danced with the utmost grace and decorum of behavior to slow and solemn music.

The following day, as Hakkouki was leaving, he presented the wodena with a purse in recognition of his courtesy. To his surprise, the wodena deliberately opened it and counted the coins.

"It is not enough," said he, coolly.

"I am sorry," said Hakkouki. "If it is not sufficient, you may return it to me, and I will send you a larger amount when I get back to Batavia."

But the wily native, fearing he might receive nothing, suddenly changed his mind.

"It is quite enough," he said; "it is more than I thought. I did not count it rightly." Whereupon he bowed with profound respect. His last look at Ah-Gap, however, whose expansive stories of Hakkouki's wealth had led him to expect more, was one of hatred.

Hakkouki, who had intended to visit the Malay Peninsula to study the growth of patchouli, learned from the wodena that it was to be found growing under cultivation not far from Sinagar, and that Java, in fact, was the principal land of its production. The wodena had also offered his services as guide, but this attention Hakkouki politely declined. Hearing that he could go from Sinagar down one of the small rivers in a canoe to a patchouli plantation, he was delighted at the opportunity for so agreeable a mode of travel. The canoe was of the peculiar model of the natives, rising high at each end, and settling deep into the water in the centre. If the sun be powerful, the passenger may lie in comfort, unable to see anything but the awning of light bamboo above; but as Hakkouki chose to travel after sundown, he had the awning removed and lay in blissful serenity, gazing into the starry heavens and thinking of his beloved Princess. When they arrived at the small landing which was to be their destination, Hakkouki preferred to finish the night in his pleasant quarters, while Ah-Gap and the two native canoemen stretched themselves upon the ground near by.

The next morning they visited the Dutch wodena of the estate, and were shown a small bed of patchouli growing. Only about one-twentieth part of an acre was under cultivation, the plants being placed about three feet apart. They must be reproduced by cutting entirely, as plants from seeds are said to have no odor. Mr. Cantly, an Englishman, familiar with the growth of patchouli, said:—

"I have never been able to verify this statement, but it is well known that plants do sometimes play tricks of this kind."

As the natives claim that it never blossoms and one man who had grown and bought it for thirty years had never seen a flower or fruit, it would seem that Nature herself reproduced the plant from stems of fallen leaves or from the roots. It is not indigenous in either Java or India, but seems to have been a native of China. No skill is required in cultivation, nor machinery in preparation.

"The crop from this piece of land is about one ton a year," said the wodena. "We mow it, stalk and all, and get about twice as much good leaf as refuse."

"The odor of patchouli first became

known in the West," said Hakkouki, "as a characteristic scent of Indian shawls, while here it has been used for ages in the powdered form for perfuming clothing."

"Look!" said Ah-Gap, "how the women decorate themselves."

Those working in the fields had garlands about their waists and bunches of the leaf stuck in their bamboo ear-rings.

The wodena explained that though they cultivated such a small piece of land, the profit realized was greater in proportion than that of any other product of the estate.

"The scent," he said, "is more powerful than that from any other flower, and we not only sell it as dried leaf to advantage, but also distil it."

The oil was of a dark brown color, extremely persistent in odor, and of great strength.

"In Holland," he continued, "they sometimes ascribe loss of appetite and nervous attacks to the excessive use of patchouli, but as one of its greatest uses here and in India is to mix it with the stuffing of beds and pillows to keep out vermin, this can scarcely be the case."

"It was probably this quality," said Hakkouki, "which caused it to be used to pack Indian shawls, and so led to its introduction to the West."

The wodena was profusive in his invitations for entertainment and desire to show Hakkouki over the coffee plantation; but Hakkouki, knowing that the passage back to Sinagar was up-stream, and that it would therefore take longer to paddle, decided to start immediately after tiffin.

As they paddled up-stream to Sinagar again, Hakkouki, lulled by the swish of the paddles, and the even, peculiar chant of the boatmen, felt his soul rise in joy and thanksgiving that his journeys were so nearly at an end.

"There is yet the sandalwood and kuskus

grass, which I shall see in the Mysore country," he said to himself. "From Batavia I must go directly to Madras. Then there will be but one important scent remaining; that is, musk."

Hakkouki had for a long time planned to take musk, which was the most dangerous, as his last journey; for should he survive this adventure, he should be within what seemed to him now a short distance of Kaffiristan.

Upon returning to Batavia, Hakkouki visited the courteous M. Belivier to thank him for his kindly entertainment upon his estate, and also to say good-by; for it was his intention to cross to Madras on his way to the Mysore country.

"Well," said M. Belivier, "then I shall have the pleasure of presenting you to my old friend, General Magadari, who can give you all the help you will need in your travels through India."

This was indeed a great kindness to Hakkouki, for time was precious to him, and he realized how valuable a friend who is a resident of a place can be, in preventing delays.

With much gratitude he bade his friend "Slamat Jalan" and took his leave.

"Ah, Tuan! Thou wilt not leave me behind," begged Ah-Gap; and Hakkouki, ever ready to grant the wishes of those about him, answered, "No, my boy; you shall go."

They boarded the steamer *Godavery* for Madras, and turned their backs on the beautiful days and brilliant skies of Java.

After a voyage of three days, Hakkouki reached Madras. As soon as he got ashore, he seated himself in a gharry, a close carriage on four wheels, while Ah-Gap packed himself and their small amount of luggage beside the dirty-looking driver. He seated himself on the very edge of the seat, for fear his clean sarong should come in contact with the driver's ill-smelling clothing. The tiny pony conveyed, or rather set forth to convey, Hakkouki to the house of General Magadari, whom M. Belevier had wished him to visit. It is not difficult to find one's way about in Madras, as the roads are excellent and the people obliging. In spite of this, however, they could not find General Magadari. No one had ever heard of him. Hakkouki continued to inquire, however, and at last met a gentleman in a carriage, who said : —

"General Magadari? Isn't he the commander of the forces?"

"He is," answered the driver.

"Then it is the second house on the right."

Delighted to have succeeded at last, Hakkouki descended from his carriage and entered the house. Passing the sentry and a throng of salaaming menials, he found himself in the spacious hall, and upon presenting his letter of introduction, received a kindly welcome from his host. Followed by Ah-Gap, he was shown an apartment, where he was able to remove the traces of his journey. He was entertained most cordially, and the next day, equipped with a letter to the military commander of Mysore, where the sandal is largely grown and exported, Hakkouki left Madras, much impressed by the gayety of the place and the affability of its citizens.

Upon arriving at Mysore, he went immediately to the house of the commander, but upon looking for the letter which had been given him, he was unable to find it.

"I had a letter of introduction to you," said Hakkouki. "It was from General Magadari."

"Never heard of such a person," answered the commander.

"He is the commander of the forces at Madras," said Hakkouki.

"Magadari!" said the commander; "that's not his name. You are an impostor, sir!"

Thus Hakkouki was not entertained in Mysore, nor did he find the missing letter, nor did he ever know the name of his amiable host in Madras. Of one thing only was he certain,—that the gentleman who had entertained him so kindly was not General Magadari.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FRIENDSHIP OF CHAN FOU.

HAKKOUKI found a place of residence just outside the town of Mysore in a bamboo hut, raised on poles five or six feet from the ground. The floor was of rattan woven strongly in and out across the sticks of bamboo. Certainly peace and contentment went hand and hand with Mysorean life. As Hakkouki sat at the top of the ladder at the entrance of his temporary home, and watched the red light of the sun fade away over the jungle, here and there flecking the leaves upon the ground with a spot of fire, and heard the soft rippling sound of the stream at the foot of the ladder, he felt himself cradled in the lap of Mother Nature.

Ah-Gap had gone to the village for food;

and Hakkouki sat waiting with the same quiet patience with which the natives of this country have waited for generations and centuries.

"Here I come, Tuan!" cried the voice of his servant, up the ladder.

Though Hakkouki had been listening for him, no sound of the native's footsteps could be heard in the soft jungle grass.

"I have brought all the food in Mysore," continued Ah-Gap, "and now you will see, my master, how good a cook I am."

And Hakkouki admitted later that he had never eaten more delicious dishes than those which his Java "boy" cooked for him.

In this delightful land Hakkouki was able to make his journeys by the streams which intersect the whole country. Shortly after his arrival, he hired two natives with their boat, to punt him to the nearest sandalwood plantation. These are all in the control of the government. No one is allowed to fell a tree but a government official. One planter, who found two trees in the way of his building a road on his estate, was obliged to write to the government to have the proper officials take possession of them.

Sandal is no doubt the most important of all odorous woods. The best wood is obtained from trees twenty to thirty feet high, which Hakkouki found growing in Mysore within a few miles of his bamboo home.

Could Hakkouki have found his letter from his amiable French friend in Madras, or have found any clew regarding General Magadari (for he felt sure this unknown person existed, else why had he been offered a letter to him ?) his stay in Mysore might have been shorter ; but British officials were loath to give much help to this unassuming gentleman of a southern clime, who dressed simply in a sarong, and was accompanied by a " thieving " Malayan servant. These English gentlemen considered a suit of pyjamas ample clothing.

Nevertheless, Hakkouki learned more of the sandal tree by being dependent upon himself than if he had been attentively shown about. He lived in the woods and found the tree growing wild. He was somewhat surprised to find it an evergreen, which flowered and fruited all the year round.

Ah-Gap, with his friendly nature, soon made native acquaintances. Among them was a girl named Sêlêma, who lived in a hut near, and whose parents had selected as a husband for her a Chinaman who had a high position on the nearest plantation. Sêlêma, having thus permission to roam at will over the plantation, often became the guide of Hakkouki and his follower.

"This is the best tree," said she, pointing to a graceful sandal. "Chan Fou said they would cut it soon. It is thirty years old." The trunk was about a foot in diameter.

To make the best wood, the trees are pulled up by the roots and left upon the ground for several months, so that the sapwood may be destroyed by the white ants. When this is accomplished they are cut into sticks three feet long and three to eight inches in diameter. Sêlêma told them that the natives used the powdered wood for fevers and other sicknesses; and that they made a paste of it to mark the line of caste upon their foreheads. The seeds of the tree are planted together with a capsicum seed; for the latter, producing a quick-growing seedling, shades the tender, young sandal. The capsicum plant also affords sustenance for it. It has lately been found that sandal has parasitic roots which attach themselves by tuber-like processes to those of many other plants, and it thrives best when grass is allowed to grow in the seed-beds, and where the seeds are planted only an inch below the surface.

As Sêlêma was to be married in about a month, she was left at home all day to make her preparations, while the rest of her family went to the plantation to work. She was but fourteen, and seemed to Hakkouki still a child. He often sat and watched her making pretty baskets and other small articles for her new home, out of the fragrant kuskus grass, which grew so plentifully all about. She made screens to be placed in the windows and doors; for Chan Fou was building a very beautiful nest for her. The screens would be wetted, and as the breeze drew through them, would diffuse an agreeable odor and coolness. Hakkouki went with her to gather the kuskus grass (sometimes called vertiver) and to draw out of the ground the long, fibrous roots.

One day as Hakkouki, with Ah-Gap in attendance, walked with Sêlêma in the jungle, he saw almost upon her shoulder, as she stood beneath a sandal tree, the great hand and arm of an orang-outang. With a quick movement Hakkouki drew the girl away, and the next moment sent a rifle bullet through the ferocious animal's brain. So quickly did it all happen, that Sêlêma stood looking on, not even frightened.

The next morning as Chan Fou in his

boat passed near the hut on his way to the plantation, he stopped to speak with Hakkouki. Now Chan Fou was no ordinary man. He had come from his home in Shanghai in the interest of the sandalwood industry. He was an owner in the steamship line which plied between Shanghai and Madras, and had been a commissioner sent from Shanghai to the exposition at Paris to display the perfumes of the East, particularly the sandalwood. He greeted Hakkouki in fairly good French, for he had heard him speaking with his servant in that language, and supposed him to be a Frenchman. Chan Fou's gratitude was unbounded. When he learned that Hakkouki was in Mysore to study the growth of the sandalwood, he was delighted to be able to assist him.

"It gives me pleasure to know you, and regret that I have not known you before," he said politely.

Chan Fou was a learned man, although he was not more than twenty-five.

"You know," he said, "sandal is probably the oldest perfume known. It is spoken of in the writings of Yaska, a Hindoo who wrote in the fifth century before Christ, and it is also referred to in epic poems of the ancient Sanskrit of about the same date. In Ceylon the essential oil was used as early as the ninth century in embalming the corpses of princes. At the present time the greatest quantity is shipped to Shanghai, for it is used in our temples as incense. We distil the oil here from the wood and export it in that form. But much wood goes to China to be used in carving, for we have small pagodas built entirely of it."

During this conversation, Chan Fou and his guest were moving slowly down-stream; the two native paddlers singing a monotonous chant, by which means they keep stroke.

"We used to raise more of it ourselves, but since the privilege has been conferred upon the East India Company by a treaty with Hyder Ali, the Hindoo prince, in 1770, they have been able, by cultivation, to raise it and ship it to us at a lower price than we can get it in China."

Arriving at the plantation, Chan Fou, learning from Hakkouki his desire to fully understand the growth of the wood with the intention of reproducing it in his "own country," was most interested, and showed him and explained to him all which could be of importance.

He then led Hakkouki to a summer-house which was built like something between a pagoda and a mosque. Here they partook of a drink called sandal sherbet, which is made from powdered wood, and is very cooling and sedative. Hakkouki felt much refreshed, for the heat of the day was intense. Later, Chan Fou offered Hakkouki a long tobacco pipe with a tiny bowl, and thus they whiled away the time of day when the heat is greatest.

"Yes, sandal is produced in India in enormous quantities since the control of the British here," continued the Chinaman. "At least thirteen thousand tons are cut every year, and still it retains its value. Here, in Mysore, it sells for a quarter its weight in silver."

Hakkouki enjoyed every moment spent with this interesting, intelligent, and courteous man. He told him that he was going to China to journey up the Yang-tse-Kiang River for musk. At this news Chan Fou's joy was great.

"Ah! Now I can assist you indeed," he said. "You must go to Shanghai, to my home. I have friends who deal in musk in Shanghai, and to them I will send you."

And so it was decided. Chan Fou wrote letters for Hakkouki to take, and sent a native to Madras to make all necessary arrangements for Hakkouki's earliest departure.

As soon as his preparations were complete, Hakkouki was taken to Madras by

Chan Fou himself, where, following his friend's advice, he dressed himself in Chinese costume.

Just before touching at Singapore, Ah-Gap expressed a desire to leave Hakkouki's service, and return to Java.

"I wish not to go into a country which is peopled by heathens and savages," said he.

Hakkouki therefore paid Ah-Gap what was due him, and regretfully bade him good-by, for the Javanese had been a faithful and willing servant.

CHAPTER XII.

INTO THE FORBIDDEN COUNTRY.

ON the voyage to Shanghai, Hakkouki felt very lonely and found it hard to pass the time. He looked over his letters and papers which Chan Fou had so kindly given him, but found every word unintelligible. He then counted his money to see how much he had left from his life in Mysore. He was surprised to find two bags which he had filled with silver, now contained only copper coins.

"Ah-Gap," he said sadly to himself. "Well, I suppose a Malay is a born thief, so I must forgive him. But I would rather not have known."

Hakkouki sat for a long time brooding over this, and feeling very lonely. A gentleman paced the deck near him, evidently intent on his own thoughts. After a time he appeared to take notice of Hakkouki, and approaching, he spoke a few words in Chinese. Hakkouki was not able to answer, and felt somewhat chagrined that he should be wearing the clothing of a nation whose language he was unable to understand. The gentleman than tried Hindoostanee, and at last Spanish. The last Hakkouki was able to speak.

"Yes," he replied, "I am going to Shanghai, and I was advised by a Chinese friend to wear the dress, as I am to go immediately to his home."

The conversation once started proved a cure for Hakkouki's loneliness, and when he went on deck next morning, he again addressed his new-found friend.

During the day the stranger informed Hakkouki that his home was in Calcutta, but that he was going to Shanghai, and from there proceed up the river to a place called Sui Fu, where he had business. This acquaintance proved of the utmost value to Hakkouki. The gentleman proved to be none other than Kishen Singh, a native of Krishna in British Thibet, and a man well and favorably known by reason of his wonderful survey of Eastern Thibet.

Chan Fou's family rendered Hakkouki every assistance, but as he had the opportunity to ascend the river in company with Kishen Singh, he was unable to make an extended visit and receive all the attentions which these hospitable people wished to show him. They supplied him with a faithful escort of six Mongols, who were acquainted with the country, and of sworn allegiance to the family.

At Ichang they left the steamer, as from this point the ascent of the river is difficult. The Wu-Shan Rapids are said to be as formidable as the Lachine Rapids of the St. Lawrence, and no steamboat is capable of stemming the force of the current. At this place Hakkouki and Kishen Singh were able to continue their journey on a junk, this being the conveyance by which the products of Thibet, tea and musk being among the principal ones, are conveyed over this difficult part of the river to China. Amidst the noise of firecrackers and the burning of joss-paper, they started, two or three lifeboats with crews, ready for an emergency, accompanying them.

This journey up the river, still the only mode of travelling in that part of the country, was a remarkable trip, and took them thirty-three days to accomplish. The junk was heavily laden with Chinese goods for the interior, and worked its way upstream amidst apparently insurmountable difficulties. The "trackers," who towed the junk from a tow-path at the side of the river, were directed by the beating of a drum upon the junk's bow. Every little while a man especially appointed for the work would calmly leap into the river and clamber on to some rock and clear the tow-line, which had got foul. In this way they at last reached Sui Fu.

Hakkouki had described his intended journey into Thibet most graphically and temptingly to Kishen Singh, and begged his company; but on each occasion he had received the answer, "It would give me the greatest pleasure, but I did not come to China for pleasure."

They had been in Sui Fu a week, during which time Hakkouki had been busy making his preparations and had seen little of Kishen Singh. As he sat drinking his tea one morning, planning for his trip, and thinking of the coolies whom he would engage, and how they should be packed, the entrance to his room was darkened by the now familiar figure of his friend. He sprang forward at once to meet him, but drew back when he noticed the dark, threatening expression on the face of his guest.

"What has gone wrong?" he asked.

"Oh, everything," was the answer. "Oh, these barbarous Chinese! What can one do with them? My patience is at an end. 'Come again in three years,' they say to me. 'We will then have a new Amban in Ta Chien-lu, and you may then be successful.'"

Kishen Singh threw himself upon a roll of blankets, utterly discouraged. It had been the one desire of his life to make a complete survey of Thibet. He had accomplished much already, but was continually balked by the objection which the Chinese had to opening up their interior to foreigners. He never lost hope, however. In three years' time, or six years, or whatever they required, he should come again. But oh! the time was so precious, for one cannot live always.

Kishen Singh was a man of small stature, but of great dignity, erect and strong, with a remarkably deep and powerful voice, although accustomed to speak in a soft and subdued tone. He wore his hair short, was beardless, seemingly by nature, and therefore had no need to shave. His features were regular, his face rather broad. His black eyes were very intelligent, his mouth delicate, and eyebrows clearly defined. Having thrown himself upon the roll of blankets, he instantly assumed a position of perfect comfort, and though irritated and annoyed, showed no suggestion of it in his manner.

"Perhaps you will be able to obtain permission from the mandarin to enter, which will give you power over the head of the Amban," said Hakkouki.

"Yes, I am trying; but even that means delay. Ah! it is always delay here in China," he answered.

"But during that time can you not go with me and enjoy the pleasure which you did not come to China for?" said Hakkouki, seductively.

Kishen Singh's expression changed, and a ray of joy lighted up his countenance. But for several moments he did not speak.

"When do you go?" he asked, at last.

"Whenever it is your royal wish," said Hakkouki, overjoyed.

Kishen Singh smiled, and realizing how ardently Hakkouki wished his company, he then and there agreed. This was of the greatest advantage to Hakkouki, on account of Kishen Singh's knowledge of the country and experience as an explorer; but more than that he had conceived for this remarkable person a great liking. Hakkouki being himself of a noble type, distinguished and superior to his fellows, was also possessed of a heart so warm and sympathetic that it responded quickly to the call for affection which exists in all human beings, and he had been attracted by this man when first he spoke to him.

As the days of their acquaintance lengthened into weeks, the affection between them had deepened. Though Hakkouki was accustomed to find the best in every human being, and to be satisfied with that, he was continually surprised as the greatness of this man's soul was further comprehended by him. To have the companionship of a man like this, seemed to Hakkouki a stroke of good fortune, such as he could never have anticipated. Little of this thought was he able to put into words as he sat drinking his tea that morning in Sui Fu. A smile told it all to Kishen Singh. There is a comprehension between those who live for high purposes in life, who study and love their fellows, which has no need of words.

But there was work to be done, for the life in the mountains must be provided for. The musk-deer is found only in the high altitudes, never less than eight thousand feet above sea-level. As its domicile borders on the region of eternal snow, clothing and provisions for a cold climate must be procured.

"Our first care must be for our passports," said Kishen Singh. "In this respect the

Thibetans are more particular than any other race."

Chan Fou's friendship had provided Hakkouki with this necessity, and Kishen Singh, being himself a native of British Thibet, was able to travel with British papers. This is not so agreeable to the Thibetans, but Kishen Singh, knowing their prejudices, had also appealed to his Chinese friends of influence in Shanghai.

"Then comes the matter of religion," said he.

"I am a Mohammedan," said Hakkouki.

"That is good," said Kishen Singh. "I am a Buddhist. The Christians are often exposed to trouble in travelling, but a Buddhist, even a British subject, is considered almost one of them; and as we shall have Mohammedans among our coolies, your religion will be a comfort to them. They are very dependent upon their masters."

Since all the journey beyond the first hundred miles was to be made on foot, and all the baggage and provisions were to be carried by men, it was necessary to have twenty-four coolies, twelve for each hunter. Occasionally the yâk is made use of by the musk hunter for transportation purposes, but no time is gained by using it, for the speed of the caravan must be that of the men who walk. Hakkouki, therefore, thought best to take only men as porters. Moreover, when animals are made use of, whether ponies, camels, or yâks, not only are they often led off in the night by brigands, but they have a most exasperating habit of disappearing on their own account.

"I remember," said Kishen Singh, "when I camped once on the hills only a few hundred miles from Lassa, awaking one morning to the knowledge that twenty-four of our animals, ponies and camels, had disappeared in the night. As the country was full of brigands, we thought we knew the cause, but at the end of four days' delay the men came in with the last of the strayed ponies.

They will get off when hobbled in a way that doesn't seem possible for them to go ten feet."

"That isn't to be one of our troubles," said Hakkouki. "Coolies won't stray far from the provision boxes."

Kishen Singh smiled. His face was now as bright as a summer's morning. Once having thrown off care, he was determined to make the most of his pleasure.

They travelled south in single file, the native guide taking the lead; then Hakkouki and Kishen Singh; behind them came the water-carriers, the tent porters, the bedding-carriers; two men with fur clothing for the cold weather in the high altitudes; two with cooking pots, plates, canteens, and so forth; two with tea, sugar, and other stores; two with ammunition; the same number with guns and rifles; and two men with sundries.

All were dressed at the start in the ordinary Chinese costume of the lowlands, very light and cool; but as the cold of the mountain of Thibet is extreme, they were also provided with warm woollen suits, and fur garments, to the ankles. These were to be strapped in by a belt during the day, and drawn to the height of the knees. At night they would be dropped to their full length and serve as bed clothing.

Kishen Singh was in the best of humor; nothing could disturb his serenity. However, all did not go smoothly, even while travelling in true Chinese territory. The tramp of each day was hard and long, and consequently fatiguing to a man somewhat out of practice. Then, one of the coolies died, and it was insisted by the others that the death was caused by a snake. As the man was a Mussulman, Hakkouki was obliged to perform the rites of burial, while all the other coolies, in open-mouthed awe, stood by.

That night Akoun, the guide, came to Hakkouki, and said, "It is best to give up the expedition."

"Indeed; why?" asked Hakkouki.

"Ah, no good fortune can come now after this ill omen."

"It is sad that Dazi is dead, but I see no ill omen in his death," said Hakkouki.

"It is not his death," was the reply, "but because it was caused by a snake."

"How can that be? There are no snakes about," said Hakkouki.

"Agreed," said Akoun; "we have not seen them, but that is no proof. Nothing else could have caused his death, for he was blessed against death from every other cause, but being a poor man he had not the money required to be blessed against snakes. So it is by a snake that he has died, and nothing but ill luck can come to us."

The men wept and groaned, and refused to go on.

"They must be beaten," said the guide, simply, who claimed to be a man of great intelligence. Although he was sure that the death had been caused by a snake, he was willing, nevertheless, to proceed even in the face of bad luck, and was ready to beat the coolies into submission, provided his pay was doubled.

Hakkouki was in despair, but Kishen Singh went out where the men lay flat upon their faces, grovelling upon the earth, in their wretchedness, and praying for forgiveness. They believed that this horror had been brought upon them because of some past sin. All night they had lain in abject misery. The day was dawning; a rosy hue pervaded the sky, and reflected a soft pink coloring upon the misty gray of the surrounding country.

Kishen Singh raised his arms, and in his deep voice said, "Rise, and look upon me!" The men obeyed. Silence for several moments reigned, while Kishen Singh looked steadily at them. Then he continued solemnly, "He who holds us in the palm of his hand has forgiven you. See," he said, pointing to the sun just showing above the far-distant hills; "He sends his messenger of light to tell you."

The effect of this speech upon the coolies was electrical. The men, children as they truly are, needed but the assurance of their master that all was well. They set to work at once to rectify the condition of the camp, to pack on their burdens, and when the march was resumed, they travelled at a speed much greater than any they had previously accomplished.

The coolies of this region, who act as hill porters, are people of a wandering nature and unknown origin. They are a mixture of Chinese, Thibetans, East Indians, and various races, speak dialects of several languages, and have at the same time a remarkable resemblance to each other in personal appearance as well as character, all of which shows that climatic and educational influences are more powerful with them than inheritance.

The caravan soon reached a higher altitude, and they felt the cold winds blowing over the snow-capped mountains. One night, having pitched their tents upon an eminence, sheltered on the side from which the wind came by the mountain rising still higher above them, they looked off over the surrounding country. In the distance, as the night grew darker, they could distinctly see the fires of another camp across the ravine where the river flowed.

"They are hunters," said Kishen Singh, after watching for some time. "And they have had good luck."

"How do you know?" asked Hakkouki.

"They cook their meat," answered Kishen Singh, simply.

"Then they are not musk hunters?"

"Well, they might be. The flesh of the musk-deer is remarkably good, and has no flavor of musk; but I think they are hunting larger game."

Again Hakkouki inquired how he knew.

"Because they are English," answered Kishen Singh.

"Tell me how you know that," persisted Hakkouki.

"Because they have more than one fire."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GRAND LAMA.

THE next day, after crossing the river, they passed the Englishmen, and were warned by them of the dangers in advance.

"We have suffered extortion in every form," said the hunters. "These people are most cruel and barbarous. They even imprisoned our Indian servants, and caused us much anxiety and delay. We advise you to turn back before it is too late."

But Hakkouki, having undertaken a thing, was hardly the man to turn back. Later he said to Kishen Singh: —

"Have you any desire to profit by the warning of the Englishmen?"

A pleasant smile from Kishen Singh was his only answer.

As they kept to the regular trail, they met other caravans going in the opposite direction. They noticed even in so short a time a change in the people, especially in those who were packing tea, from place to place. One man carries his bricks of tea a certain distance, where they are taken up by another, while he returns for more, thereby going over the same road each day. By packing the bricks one above another high over their heads, and in parallel lines the width of their shoulders, they were able to carry enormous quantities.

The average load is nine packages — about two hundred pounds; but some men carry as many as seventeen — over three hundred pounds. Women frequently carry seven or eight, and even children were seen trudging along behind their parents with a package or two.

At the beginning of their journey these tea porters were Chinese, with the customary clothing and queue, but as Hakkouki's caravan went onward into the mountains of the Yunnan country in Eastern Thibet, the passers-by presented a marked change, both of feature and raiment. Although the government is in the hands of the Chinese, who keep in every village a representative known as the Amban, the Thibetans are still very independent, and often the Amban stands more in fear of them than they of him, as Hakkouki and Kishen Singh soon had reason to learn.

As a spur to their enthusiasm they met musk hunters returning, and although to their inquiry, "Have you had good fortune?" they invariably received the same answer, "There are no longer any musk-deer in the mountains," they continued to push on. "For," they reasoned, "had they not obtained their usual load they would not return." But musk, even in the hills, is so valuable, selling at the rate of five dollars for a good pod weighing about an ounce, that competition cannot be encouraged.

One night they camped in close proximity to a company of hunters, and here it was decided to remain for a few days, at least, and make a trial. The altitude was about twelve thousand feet. During the day the cold, dry wind had cut their skins into deep fissures, which were so painful as to prevent their sleeping. For protection they manufactured helmets of thick cloth, with a mask to cover the face, in which were cut two holes for the eyes. Both Hakkouki and Kishen Singh were meat-hungry; for the weather was cold, and they had depended upon their skill in hunting to supply this article.

"If we get no musk-deer, we may get a stag or a goat, or at least something edible," said Hakkouki.

They were surprised, soon after supper, by a visit from one of their neighbors. He was a Chinaman, and a more uncanny and unreliable-looking being Hakkouki, in all his wanderings, had not come upon. He was evidently clever, of an intriguing order, with a suspicious gleam in his narrow, restless eyes, and a coarse, cruel mouth, constantly in motion, even when not speaking. His queue was twisted about his head under his headdress, and therefore made no showing. Having been in the mountains a long time, he had allowed his hair to grow over his forehead to his eyebrows.

"Are you Chinamen?" he asked, bending forward and spreading his arms in greeting, at the same time letting his tongue drop from his mouth to the end of his chin. This is the greeting of the Thibetans, and might have been misleading had not Kishen Singh been familiar with both races.

"No; I am a Thibetan," answered Kishen Singh, in good Chinese.

This, their visitor evidently did not believe, as, after a momentary look of surprise, he said, "I thought so; otherwise you would not have dared enter the country at such a time as this." Then, looking curiously about, he added, "Perhaps you are pilgrims who travel to the sacred city of Lassa?"

"No," answered Kishen Singh. "We are here to hunt the musk-deer."

"Then I must disappoint you," said the Chinaman. "The Chinese government has passed a law prohibiting the killing of the deer. They are becoming almost unknown in these parts, and time must be given for their protection and increase."

"But," answered Kishen Singh, "as the control by the government over these outlying districts is somewhat shadowy, the value of musk, and the ease with which it can be surreptitiously sent away, would certainly place a premium on poaching."

The Chinaman rose to his feet, and his eyes became narrower as he spoke.

"I am here to prevent poaching, should you attempt it."

"How?" asked Kishen Singh, quietly.

"I have a guard. I can arrest you."

"What would that profit you?" asked Kishen Singh.

Instantly this word quieted the Celestial, and he seated himself on the left side of the opening to the tent again, as is the custom in Thibet.

"Perhaps you can make it more profitable to me not to arrest you," said he, suavely.

"Perhaps," was the smiling rejoinder of Kishen Singh.

"Now, what would you offer?"

"Well, we can talk of that later, when we have decided to poach."

At last, the Chinaman, unable to get a settled statement of price, was forced to depart. But every evening during their stay he paid them a visit and discussed the matter of payment. By these visits Hakkouki and Kishen Singh obtained more information than they could have done in any other way. The Chinaman told them of the habits of the animal, and even the most probable locations of its lair. But his amazement would have been great had he known that every evening after he took his departure, they started out upon their hunt. This they very cautiously kept to themselves, while the Chinaman went home chuckling.

"They hunt the deer in the daytime. A precious pair of fools! When the animal never leaves its lair while the sun shines!"

Hakkouki and Kishen Singh, however, knew this before they came to the hills.

Hakkouki had once before hunted at night, and he was very forcibly reminded of his experience with the civet in Abyssinia, which now seemed to him so long ago.

"They sleep, they sleep," laughed the Chinaman. "They thank me for all that I tell them, and go out in the daytime to hunt the deer which sleeps, which sleeps."

And he stood off in the darkness of the woods and watched the camp close up and settle down to slumber. Then, shaking with cold and laughter, he hurried on to sleep himself.

He would not have slept so happily had he dreamt of what really took place. With their guns upon their shoulders, and four of the coolies carrying ammunition and food, they started off in the opposite direction from their neighbor's camp. Rounding the hill, they came up on the other side near a clump of birch and juniper trees, thickly interspersed by the low bushy rhododendrons, and there quietly lay in waiting.

The animals are not gregarious, but go about in couples. As the male only is possessed of the gland in which the musk is secreted, Hakkouki was anxious to shoot only the male. He had purposely separated him self from the others, who were to stalk the animal from a different direction. He had already been told how the deer, upon observing any one, will generally stand perfectly motionless for a long time, gazing at the intruder. As he lay upon the ground, he found his long fur garment very comfortable. It seemed hours that he lay thus. As his eyes became accustomed to the darkness, he could make out objects in the distance, which he had not at first been able to see. Trees and branches, hills and leaves, outlined themselves gradually as he lay there; but the clump of thick shrubbery was the one thing upon which his attention was riveted. Still nothing moved within or without it. Hours passed, and in time Hakkouki felt no comfort in his fine fur garment, for certainly he could not be colder had he been without it. His teeth chattered, and he feared, should the animal really show itself, his fingers would be too numb to pull the trigger. A terrible feeling of loneliness, moreover, came over him. The complete isolation was terrible.

No sound or sight had he been able to catch of Kishen Singh and the men since he had left them. He had planned to lie there until dawn, but it was so long in coming that Hakkouki felt that something must be wrong with it, for certainly it was long past time for daylight to appear. He had about given up all hope, when suddenly a sound fell upon his ear. It was the cracking of a twig. Could it be a deer? Later, he heard another sound still farther off, and was able to discern moving figures. They were men. His impatience knew no bounds. It must be Kishen Singh and the men returning to the camp, he thought. But no! they were strange men. He could see plainly. They were some of the Chinaman's coolies.

At that moment, within a few feet of his left arm, another sound caught his ear and he heard a soft breathing. He glanced in the direction and there could see the head of a deer thrust out among the leaves. The slender tusks, two or three inches long, protruding over the lower lip, pronounced it to be a male. With his great, gentle eyes, the deer watched the moving figures, who were now too far away to see him. It stood perfectly motionless, occasionally uttering a loud hiss.

Knowing the folly of haste, Hakkouki slowly raised the rifle in position, pointed it just below the shoulder, and drew the trigger.

The animal fell immediately, and Hakkouki lay as still as before and patiently watched his unknown stalkers going in the opposite direction. When they had disappeared, he rose and went to secure the game. The animal was much smaller than he had supposed it would be, standing not more than twenty inches at the shoulder, and of a general dark gray color, with almost black spots. The hair was of a peculiar kind, long, rough, and very brittle, though undoubtedly a good protection against the cold. As he stood gazing, a noise behind attracted his attention, and the mate appeared. Seeing Hakkouki, with one long heartrending shriek, she took to flight. Her immensely elongated heels gave her a wonderfully firm hold as she sped over the uneven rocky country, and, with the swiftness of a chamois, she was soon out of sight.

Hakkouki was anxious to find his party as soon as possible, and he also wished to wait long enough to give the strangers time to get completely out of hearing. He wondered they hadn't come to him upon hearing the report of the rifle; but if Hakkouki had been able to see round the cliff, he would have seen his stalkers taking to their heels.

Kishen Singh happened to witness the whole proceeding, and therefore lay quietly until Hakkouki threw the animal over his shoulder and turned toward the camp. Then Kishen Singh joined him.

"Our neighbors," he said, "were examining their snares; they do not shoot the animal, but set traps and go to them toward morning."

"Did they know we were here, do you think?" asked Hakkouki.

"No; they had not a suspicion of it. I could hear them talk."

"But the report of the rifle," said Hakkouki.

"Ah, you should have seen them run," laughed Kishen Singh. "But we must get back; it will soon be light."

The Chinaman changed the hour of his call, and when he arrived next day at noon he found his neighbors gone to hunt.

"That's good," he chuckled. "They must work hard so they will sleep to-night." His ugly face screwed itself into a most painful expression, as he continued, "I'd like to know who fired that shot. Can we have other visitors in these parts?"

Next day the two hunters decided to pack up and leave. There was, no doubt, plenty of game in the locality, but they had rather more of the Chinaman's company than they desired; moreover, their hunger having been satisfied, they preferred to go farther on into wilder country.

Akoun, the guide, obliged the men to pack in the greatest haste, and during the process he exhibited much pleasure. For, to tell the truth, Akoun was very much afraid of their neighbor. Although a man of remarkable physical strength, he was almost entirely devoid of moral courage, and the expression of this Chinaman's face took the "backbone" out of him terribly.

His haste, however, profited him nothing; for Hakkouki ordered the caravan to pass the camp of their neighbor, who, having been informed by his servants, stood waiting to receive them. His face assumed a pleasant expression, but he was nevertheless troubled. When Kishen Singh called good-by without stopping, the Chinaman ran along beside him. "The money, the money," he demanded.

"What money?" asked Kishen Singh.

"That which should profit me more if I did not arrest you."

"Oh, that wasn't money. See," and Kishen Singh showed him Hakkouki's passport.

It was merely a small paper with a few characters in Chinese, unintelligible to Hakkouki. But it was effective. The man prostrated himself at once, and the caravan passed on unmolested.

"Do you think the government has put restrictions upon the hunting of the deer?" asked Hakkouki later, as they tramped along.

"That I do not know," answered Kishen Singh. "But certainly this man was not here for that purpose; moreover, his men hunted the deer. So long as musk remains one of the most prized perfumes, and commands an almost fabulous price in the European markets, the animal will be hunted in spite of all restrictions, though probably, like the beaver and the bird of paradise, its entire extermination is only a question of years."

"The pods are so small that they can be easily shipped in great numbers," said Hakkouki, for he carried the one which had been cut from the deer he had shot in his pocket.

"Yes," said Kishen Singh. "More than

fifty-three thousand deer are sacrificed to supply the Shanghai export trade alone, in one year."

"It is said that several attempts have been made to rear the musk-deer in captivity, as was tried with the civet in Holland," said Hakkouki, "but in no instance has the attempt been successful."

"Its habits are altogether opposed to domestication," said Kishen Singh. "This climate, wild life, and opportunity for long runs and climbing cannot be reproduced in captive life. The animal soon goes blind and dies. I once saw one which had been caught young, and brought home by a hunter. It was so tame that it would play with the children and their dog. The dog was equally fond of the deer, and it was amusing to see him attack any stranger who presumed to touch his timid playmate. The usual food appears to be leaves and flowers, although the natives say that they eat snakes. These children fed it on bread and milk and leaves, but it soon went blind and died, and apparently suffered much pain."

"How old do you think the deer was which I shot?" asked Hakkouki.

"About five or six years. It was in the very best condition. After three years the pod is well filled with musk, but it increases later."

At the end of a week they reached the part of the country for which they had set out, but at the base of the mountain which it was their intention to climb, they came upon a small village. The people of the village were exceedingly troublesome, mobbing them in regular Chinese fashion, and displaying a stubborn sort of insolence. One who was asked to step back drew a sword and threatened to use it, when Akoun, who was unarmed, promptly struck him with his fist. For a few moments it looked as if there were going to be a free fight; stones and clods of earth were thrown at the coolies. There was a pause, however, when Kishen Singh and Hakkouki unslung their rifles, and after a little hesitation the caravan was allowed to move on in peace.

Though the headman of the village was present all the time, he appeared to have no influence whatever, notwithstanding the fact that his intentions were of the best. The headman of the district was also in the village, and sent a scarf of welcome and an iron vessel full of chang (a sort of beer), with an apology for not coming. It was rather amusing a week later, when the caravan came down the mountain, in passing through the village, to find this same headman soliciting a signed certificate, stating that Hakkouki had been well treated in the district.

During the week upon the mountain, they killed a stag and some smaller game, while Hakkouki added eleven musk pods to his store.

Having heard that a Grand Lama of Thibet lived within four days' journey, Hakkouki determined to visit him. By this time

Akoun was behaving in a strange manner, and causing much annoyance by one peculiar habit which he had of hiding things, and some time after producing them and demanding a reward.

"It seems probable that we shall have more serious trouble with him on the return journey to Sui Fu," said Hakkouki one morning to Kishen Singh.

"I have thought of that," answered Kishen Singh. "I think the visit to the Grand Lama, which you suggested yesterday, may do him good. He is a Buddhist."

So Hakkouki's answer to the headman's request for a certificate was that he had yet four days longer to be in his district, and upon reaching the boundary he should give him a certificate according to the way he was treated.

When entering the village where the Grand Lama lived they could see the monastery, consisting of several tents, high up on the hillside. Many Lamas who lived there came out to meet them, and politely asked to see their papers. Being satisfied with the ones Kishen Singh showed them, they led them with great courtesy toward the large tent where sat the Grand Lama, a man of intelligent appearance, and quiet dignity. Without rising he offered his hand and hoped they had had a pleasant journey, and with the same smiling face seen alike on Buddhas of statue and Buddhas of flesh and blood, he bade them be seated. They placed themselves, Eastern fashion, to the left of the aperture in the tent and partook of tea with butter in it. There was nothing in the abode to indicate any attempt at luxury or cleanliness. All the furniture seemed to be equally neglected; but an altar had been raised and there were some sacred images enclosed in a sort of tabernacle or movable chapel.

After a short time a great noise of drums and cymbals was heard; and this being a call to prayer, Hakkouki and Kishen Singh took their leave.

They had pitched their tents, on entering the village, about half a mile below the monastery. Imagine their surprise, then, when they returned to find the tents gone.

"We must have come the wrong way," said Hakkouki.

"Why, surely this is the spot," answered Kishen Singh.

"It must be," said Hakkouki; "for you can see where the stakes have been driven, and also how the ground has been torn up in the haste of packing."

The two friends looked at each other and actually laughed. What could be said?

"What can have prompted Akoun to do it?" said Hakkouki.

"Fear," answered Kishen Singh. "Certainly he has lost much by it, for the goods he has taken are not worth the wages he was to receive when we returned to Sui Fu, but he has our fur coats."

"But he'll have no need of them in Sui Fu," answered Hakkouki.

"He can sell them," suggested Kishen Singh. "Was there any money, anything of value, in your pockets? I changed my papers, letter of credit, and passport, into this pocket," he continued.

Hakkouki searched his own pockets, and his face fell. "My passport!" he gasped. "It's gone!"

"Ah, so Akoun will pass himself through the country like a grandee," laughed Kishen Singh. "So it was pride as well as fear."

Hakkouki seated himself on the ground. "Not one thing do I possess but the clothes I wear, and my eleven musk pods," he said. "I must apply to the Grand Lama for help in overtaking this rascal."

And, indeed, this kindly man did prove a friend. After a long discussion, wherein Hakkouki and Kishen Singh told him of their plans and wishes, he said: "Leave it all to me. I will see that the fellow is quickly stopped upon the road and justly punished. But as you are both anxious to get to Calcutta in the shortest possible time, why return to Sui Fu? We are not far from the boundary line of British India. Once there, I hear they have ways of travel much more rapid than we have. You have only to travel directly west."

"You are both wise and right," answered Kishen Singh. "The country of Assam in India lies directly west of this. We shall be safe there."

"I will send an escort with you to the boundary," said the Lama.

A few hours later Hakkouki and Kishen Singh, with much gratitude, bade him farewell. Kishen Singh promised prompt acknowledgment as soon as they should arrive in a city where his letter of credit would be of use, for these Lamas are very poor.

Mounted upon mules, to facilitate their speed, they set forth; the smiling wooden face of the Grand Lama haunting them for many a day.

They had anticipated little trouble when once in India; but it was a rough country, very little opened up, and they rode on for many miles before meeting any but natives. The escort left them at the boundary, but it had been agreed that they should take two mules with them when leaving the men. Having no maps and a very indefinite idea of the country, they soon realized that the provisions which they carried on their saddles must be used very sparingly.

For two hundred miles they did not encounter a white man. At last they unexpectedly came upon a tea plantation, and were able to exchange two of the musk pods for small money. This was very useful in dealing with the natives. They were also guided to the next tea plantation, and there were entertained by a very agreeable Englishman, who was as pleased to see them as they were to see him, for he had been months away from intelligent human beings. After a few days' rest he journeyed with them to the railroad, and there bought their mules to enable them to purchase tickets to Calcutta. They were also able to learn the day of the week, and by the calendar found they had been seven months in China. Although they had found a much shorter road from the musk country to a seaport, it is still sent by the arduous overland route from Yunnan to Shanghai, a distance of fourteen hundred miles. And no doubt many years will elapse before China will be brought to see the advantage to be gained by shipping her products from foreign ports.

CHAPTER XIV.

WINNING THE PRINCESS.

WHEN Hakkouki arrived at Calcutta, he realized that his travels were practically at an end. He had visited the lands wherein the most important and delightful scents were produced, — he had learned how to care for the plants in their growth, and knew how to prepare perfumes from them. With him he carried patchouli cuttings, sandal and kuskus seeds, also those of the lily from which ylang-ylang is obtained.

While in Batavia he had written to Camduatim at Scutari asking him to send him cuttings or seeds of the Bulgarian rose, the jasmine, heliotrope, violet, mignonette, lavender, and other flowers of Southern France.

He was much gratified to find the package awaiting him, together with a long letter from his old friend, telling of his intended return to Persia, and begging him to join him there. But Hakkouki scarcely realized the ardor of the old man's request in his impatience to reach the one spot on earth where, to him, the sun ever shone and life was constant happiness.

Hakkouki had also in his possession a few vanilla beans, which he had every reason to believe would grow successfully in Kaffiristan. As for the baser, animal substances, such as musk, civet, and ambergris, Hakkouki decided that he would not introduce them into his beloved country. To that land without perfumes, he would take only the scents of herbs, woods, and flowers; those which to his mind were wholesome, natural, and alone intended to gratify the sense of smell.

In Calcutta Hakkouki ordered clothing of the most beautiful and regal style. He had the garments cut after the manner of those which he had worn while in Kaffiristan; for he wished to appear before Drusa looking as he did when she had first bestowed her maiden love upon him.

During his long separation from the Princess, Hakkouki had changed in some ways. His travels and adventures had brought him a great knowledge of men and things; his mind had become broadened by contact with them. By being thrown upon his own resources he had learned self-reliance, patience, and the power to do; and because of a high ambition and a pure mind he had grown much in manliness and goodness.

In other ways, however, he had not changed. Through all his wanderings he had carried the image of his Princess in his heart, and her spirit had been his life. Night and day he had lived as completely in her spiritual presence as he had lived in her actual presence while at her court.

From Calcutta he went by train to Cabul in Afghanistan, whence, after a few days' ride, he was able to strike the trail with which he was already familiar, the trail which led to the mountain and pass into Kaffiristan.

Oh! the joy which thrilled him as he travelled that road. He remembered his enthusiasm when, with his dear friend Bokhatan, he first saw it; then, later, his wild exultation when he passed out into the world to win honor, fame, and the right to claim the fairest maiden of all the earth. And now, success having crowned his efforts, he rode back to make her his bride, with triumph shining in his countenance and love reigning in his heart.

At the entrance to the pass, a sentinel perched upon a rocky spur recognized the traveller and at once gave the welcome cry: —

"Hakkouki!"

Lifting his trumpet, he blew one long blast, which was taken up in the gorge below, and passed from one guard to another, until it reached the city, and the ears of Drusa.

"Hakkouki has returned!" was the cry that went throughout the kingdom. Even the everlasting hills took up the joyful note, and echoed it the length and breadth of the plateau. Men, women, and children ran that they might welcome this man who, though of the outer world, had become their benefactor and idol.

With the guard following him, Hakkouki rode on between the towering walls of the pass. He went slowly in order that the hurrying people might keep pace with him. All along the route, crowds saluted him with cries of "Peace be with thee, Hakkouki! Joy to thee and thy beautiful Drusa!"

But although the sounds of the greetings fell upon Hakkouki's ears pleasantly, and filled him with exultation, he hardly knew it, for his heart was beating wildly at the thought of meeting his beloved.

At last he reached the steps of the palace and saw her. Beside her father, in a robe of golden colored silk, she stood, like a radiant angel, holding out her arms and smiling upon him. Springing from the saddle, he bounded up the steps, and, falling upon one knee, kissed his adored one's hand.

"Nay; rise, most noble Hakkouki!" said the King. "We are happy that thou hast returned to us in safety. We know that thou hast not come back without having fulfilled thy mission wisely and well. All honor to thee, and all praise."

Hakkouki, rising to his full height, turned toward the cheering populace. As he stretched out his arms and raised them over his head, a hush fell upon the multitude. Then, in tones deep and sincere, he spoke: —

"My people! Oh, my people! My heart has yearned for you during these years of absence, and now that I am with you again, it is full of joy. I have brought back knowledge and a new delight for this, my country. Be Allah's all the praise!"

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